Careering

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CAREERING

GENERATING A PATH FROM UNCERTAINTY TO DISCOVERY

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Careering:
generating a path from uncertainty
to discovery

Proefschrift

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Abstract

It is a sign of postmodern times that the popular construct of *career*, used for making sense of one's working life, has become obsolete for many. In this dissertation, the concept of career is examined by applying social constructionist principles generating a new term: *careering*. Careering, as opposed to career, lays the ground for a more flexible and relevant approach to understanding and cultivating one's work trajectory. Alternative renderings of career are particularly relevant for women in society, because traditional notions of career as a consistent and linear progression often stand in contrast to many women's interrupted career patterns linked to family-related life choices and limited opportunities within certain career paths. Based on this development in women's lives, careering is examined as a possible framework for making sense of their career paths. Appreciative Inquiry methods provided the foundation for the use of positive-oriented career stories. The study involved cross-generational pairings of women and girls sharing such stories. In addition, a qualitative methodology was adapted from The Listening Guide, an analytic tool developed by psychologist Carol Gilligan and her colleagues, who introduced a relational, voice-centered theory for understanding women's development. Participants' shared storytelling sessions are presented as short performances. This choice of presentation for the data draws attention to the participants' shared constructions. The findings strongly suggest that career is a dynamic, relationally based process for the women and girls in this study, affirming one of the central tenets of careering. In addition, it was apparent that although participants expressed uncertainty retrospectively and currently about their career moves, it was within their relationships with each other and with others mentioned in their stories that they discovered how to proceed in meaningful ways.

Acknowledgements

With gratitude to Dr. Mary Gergen, my advisor, whose persistent guidance and performative exchanges kept me awake and on course. In addition, conversations with Dr. John Risjman and Dr. Ken Gergen were invaluable in generating a broader sense of possibility for this work.

Dedication

> Wherever conversation leads you, I trust you will experience how listening and talking to one another heals our divisions and makes us brave again. We discover one another and our great human capacities.
>
> Margaret Wheatley

It is the brave women in this world and their countless strivings through centuries past and present that I first want to honor: women who have fought for recognition of equality on par with men in the work place as well as those women who create small and large ways to weave their love into the daily tasks of paid and unpaid work.

The women and girls in this study and my clients in my psychotherapy practice have been instrumental in teaching me about staying close to what matters. I am grateful for this shared knowledge and look forward to ongoing conversations about work and meaningful lives.

The stories that my mother, Theresa Sydow, RN, NP, shared with me as a young girl are a source of inspiration for this study and its design. In addition, my mother's enthusiasm and heartfelt sense of humor expressed in her work as a nurse served to open the door for my own career as a psychotherapist. Most importantly, her approach to work taught me about the joy and humility involved in helping others and the inevitable mutuality of all human interactions.

My father, Dr. Gunnar E. Sydow, before he passed away offered me his nameplate (Dr. Sydow) an artifact from the job he retired from at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I believe it was my father who first asked me about *when*, not *if*, I was going to get my Ph.D. His persistent belief in my abilities served to set me on this path. My father's passion for knowledge and his love of art sparked many of my own interests, and for this I am forever grateful.

My daughter, Maya Poulter, was ending middle school when I began working on my doctoral dissertation and is now about to graduate from college. While doggedly pursuing my own intellectual development, I have been so fortunate to be close by Maya as she has grown into an extraordinary young woman fully involved in her own careering. I am grateful for all that she has taught me as her mom and friend.

I met my life partner, Beth A. Smith, MA, LPC, during the early stages of my dissertation. It is my absolute fortune that I had the wisdom to invite her for an interview that morning we first met at the dog park. This was our first of countless enticing conversations about work, organizations, and the relational life. Beth has offered me the most precious gift of all by unwaveringly being next me in this rich and arduous endeavor. I am grateful for Beth's loving presence and conceptual abilities, which have been central for developing my confidence and, ultimately, for my completing this project.

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Chapter I
Clinical Stories: Feminism, Social Constructionism, and Women's Careers

In words attributed to the great master of psychology, Sigmund Freud, the major challenges of life center on finding satisfaction in two important areas: love and work (as cited in Erikson, 1980, p. 102). Although both love and work hold significant relevance for a life well lived for both men and women, historically, the domain of paid work and having a vocation has predominantly been assigned to men, while women have found themselves holding the torch for love, care, and family life. During the past century, women's role in society has been questioned and examined, becoming a topic of much debate, while the women's movement has broken down barriers, opened up possibilities, and established legislation to assure that women's opportunities are on par with men's.

While women have been establishing themselves within the economic sphere of society, the territory of work for all has significantly changed. Of import to this dissertation is the shifting nature of the meaning of work itself. The history of work has been evolutionary, and even in the present century, one might say revolutionary. Of special importance to our current economic circumstances in the West is the transition from a manufacturing to an information era of work. In order for members of society to accommodate to this new structure of work, flexibility and change are required as new opportunities open and older ones close down. Whereas it was once customary for a worker, primarily male, to participate in their particular vocation for decades, even from youth to old age, this is now a pattern of the past. Because of this shift, I along with many theorists of work believe that the concept of career, as a single, central, coherent, and progressive narrative of work, has become obsolete. More accurately, one is embarked on a multifaceted, uneven, and diverse plane of activity, which constitutes one's work life.

To describe this current process of work, I have coined the term careering, a gerund useful in describing this complex and often unstable occupational endeavor in which many of us, men and women are engaged today. The research I undertook for this dissertation focused on an exploration of careering among women and girls in an intergenerational study. I introduced an intergenerational component to this study with the hopes of capturing a wider range of perspectives with which to explore the concept of careering. In addition, I began this study with a strong interest in any mutual benefits that exist for women and girls during the shared storytelling component. I chose women and girls for this study because women have a familiarity with approaches to work that share a theme of adaptation and unconventionality in their attempts to reach an understanding of the intersection of career and relational life. Women are, therefore, notably in a position to expand our knowledge of relevant ways to approach work as we proceed in the 21st century.

Observations from the Clinic

As a practicing psychotherapist for the past 24 years, I brought to this study many observations from my work, which has been instrumental in the development of my knowledge on the topic of women and career. Although I have not promoted myself professionally as a career counselor, I have discovered that helping my clients with their

career processes is critical to their development of meaning and satisfaction in life. Two powerful theoretical influences on my work as a psychotherapist are social constructionism and feminism. Both have been instrumental in shaping how I approach my work as a psychotherapist while also serving as guideposts for this research endeavor. This section briefly reflects on my career as a psychotherapist and how this relates to this dissertation.

Social constructionism and psychotherapy. Early on in my career as a psychotherapist, with a group of like-minded professionals, I was introduced to the theories of social constructionism through Kenneth Gergen's (1991) seminal publication, *The Saturated Self*. As a group, we already were working with the tenets of feminism as a means to explore the relationship between psychotherapy and social issues by sharing readings by Carole Gilligan (1993), Jean Baker Miller (1986), and coauthors Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stive, and Janet Surrey (1991) from The Stone Center, the research and action wing of Wellesley College's Centers for Women. Our discovery of social constructionism provided a strong alternative to traditional psychology's alignment with scientific theories and most notably the separation of individuals from their environment. We also found social constructionism to expand on the feminist theorists we had been exploring, with its introduction of the notion that our identities were co-constructed through our social relationships, day to day, rather than understanding ourselves as existing within a sociohistorical cultural framework. The latter understanding leaves the individual intact, albeit with the impact of her social surroundings. The former, social constructionism, argues that individuals, the culture, history, and our futures are all constructed through our social relationships. Given that I already believed that it made no sense to perceive individual clients without regard for the social context within which their lives unfolded, social constructionist philosophy provided me with a much-needed paradigm shift to expand my thinking about change and what is possible, the power of language, and the performative aspects of conducting my work as a psychotherapist.

Traditional psychology, which focuses on the self as its subject of study, adheres to the belief that the self is a fixed, separate entity. Systems of diagnosis and treatment therefore are based on this interpretation of the self (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). This understanding of the self as a separate entity is mainstay for most members of society in the west and has dominated western thinking, most notably since the Enlightenment era of philosophy originating in 18th-century Europe as part of the development of the modern world. The cultural landscape of postmodern thought draws into question the possibility of a reality separate from its observer (Kvale, 1992). Social constructionism, a postmodern philosophical development, has established the self as a relational self: one that emerges *through our relational interactions* during the course of day-to-day life (K. J. Gergen, 1991, 2009). An understanding of the self as a dynamic component of a larger social process transforms psychotherapy into a deeply collaborative undertaking (S. Friedman, 1993; K. J. Gergen, 2006; McNamee & K. J. Gergen, 1993). Through a postmodern lens, the psychotherapist emerges as a co-conspirator for change, acting *with* the client to craft more advantageous narratives and performative moves. Numerous creative and effective outcomes of postmodern

applications to the field of psychology have occurred. Solution-Focused Therapy (de Shazer, 1991), narrative therapy (Bird, 2000; Epston & White, 1990; Freedman & Combs, 1996), postmodern therapy (Anderson, 1997; S. Friedman, 1993) and performative psychology (Holzman, 1999) are some of the developments in the field of psychology that incorporate social constructionist ideas and are methods that I have integrated into my clinical practice.

Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (1992), pioneers of postmodern therapy, describe psychotherapy as consisting of relationship, language, and conversation. The therapeutic conversation is understood as a generative dialogue that is founded in "not knowing" shifting the psychotherapist away from an authoritative role. This becomes a shared inquiry between client and therapist and is best described as a collaborative partnership rather than the therapist positioning himself or herself as the expert. Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer's (1993) Solution-Focused Therapy challenges psychotherapists to use solution-oriented language rather than problem-saturated terms that play back and reinforce the problem. Through the use of solution-based language, both client and therapist are better able to discover relevant solutions for the client. Michael White and David Epston (1990), in *Narrative Means to Therapeutic End*s, argue for a narrative approach to therapy and the centrality of the clients' liberation from systematic social oppression. White and Epston draw on the work of Michel Foucault, a widely influential French philosopher who argued for deconstructing systems of thought and power in society. From Foucault's (1980) perspective, knowledge and power are viewed as interchangeable and are more accurately expressed as knowledge/power or power/knowledge. Narrative psychotherapy from this perspective is a politicized endeavor, empowering clients to write their own stories, armed with an understanding of society's power structures. These narratives of liberation can range from a 10-year-old boy writing a letter to an externalized "problematic" part of himself that gets him in trouble in school by "making" him interrupt the class to a young women writing a letter to anorexia or writing to the companies that endorse the type of advertising that feeds young women's unrealistic expectations for her body image. One of the most widely recognized postmodern methods applied to the career development field is a narrative approach, which utilizes story and narration as a career development method (Cochran, 1997). This approach is further addressed in the section: Social Constructionist Contributions to Career Development Theory and Practice.

More recently, in my practice, I have begun to incorporate methods from performative psychology, developed by Lois Holzman and Fred Newman (Holzman, 1999; Newman & Goldberg, 1996). In Holzman and Newman's words, performative psychology's intention is "freeing psychology from its scientific pretenses and transforming it into a cultural activity and study" (Eastside Institute, 2010, para. 1). Performative psychology is a deeply social approach to psychotherapy that emphasizes the process of learning and becoming as relevant to both clients and therapists as they grow and develop together or, it could be said, *perform* together. This can involve a range of practices such as street theatre as a method for discovering new solutions to social problems or social therapy in the form of groups where members explore ways to become creative actors in their own lives.

By applying a range of postmodern approaches to my practice as a psychotherapist, I have maintained a reflexive stance and consider psychotherapy in itself a form of ongoing research. My work as a psychotherapist is present through out this dissertation and has been fundamental to my understanding of postmodernism, social constructionism, feminism, and career development.

Women and their careers. In my psychotherapy practice, as my women and girl clients explore their current or potential work or careers, the rich narratives that arise have captivated me. I find that by addressing their career process directly, their sense of meaning and satisfaction in life readily emerges. These career narratives are often woven closely with relational narratives. Some reveal tensions related to their primary involvement in caregiving for children or sometimes friends and family members. Some women express this narrative process as seeking to make sense of the seemingly divergent roles of mothering and professional identities. I have also noted that women commonly express relational interpretations of their work environments, such as highlighting the story of their day by sharing a story about their relationships at work. I also recognize that women and girls' personal narratives frequently reveal limitations when the topic of work and career arise. These limitations seem to be hidden, and through the therapeutic process, we discover what is not said or recognized as possible life/work directions. A goal to pursue creating a small business, for example, might not be mentioned because my client has already decided that this is not a realistic endeavor, or a young client's interest in a medical career has already been ruled out because she does not believe that she can handle the science courses.

Notably, I have noticed that work is rarely the presenting issue for my female clients until I inquire about it. Once discussions of work have been drawn to the foreground, I notice that the ongoing construction of their working life becomes a dynamic topic of relevance for the majority of my female clients. It is as if these discussions of work have been relegated to the margins of more acceptable therapy conversations about issues such as a client's depression, relationships, or past personal traumas. I have also noticed this to be true for my adolescent girl clients as it relates to their immediate and future dreams. Once discussions arise regarding possible future selves, many of my girl clients express significant anxiety about not knowing how to make such an important decision and where to go for help. In 1998, an American Psychological Association task force conducted a survey with 733 adolescent girls to identify and prioritize their concerns (APA Presidential Task Force on Adolescent Girls: Strengths and Stresses, 1999). They asked each participant to create six questions they would most like to ask an expert. The task force was surprised by the frequency by which these girls expressed their desire and concern for finding the right career and how to access adult mentors to help them with this process. Because there has been significant progress for women's equal rights in society, adolescent girls now have available a substantial increase of choices for living their lives, while at the same time, these same girls are missing structure and guidance as they ponder this increasingly open field. As a note, in stark contrast to my female clients, my male clients frequently present in their first session with concerns about their work environments and careers. While my adolescent male clients do express concern about their future, their narratives often

express a confidence that they will be able to figure it out. Discussions about work appear more feasible for my male clients, as they draw upon a social discourse that imbues them with a familiarity with how things are suppose to go in the working world.

Some of the reoccurring career-related issues that I have observed among my female clients are adolescent girls struggling to discern their interests, identify potential careers and engage practical steps; divorced women, who primarily have been focused on their families with interrupted career patterns or minimal career development, becoming ready to engage in the work force in a different way; young women preparing for graduation from college and securing their first significant job; and women in their 40s or 50s initiating a career change. I frequently am struck, on the one hand, by the importance of making these life/work decisions and, on the other hand, by the minimal availability of social support and recognition for women to decipher the complexity of moving in today's world of work. I observe career development occurring for women within their private worlds with minimal support or guidance from friends, family, or even a career counselor. It strikes me as an especially lonely passage for what is essentially a socially embedded act: work.

Over the course of addressing career concerns with my female clients, I have grown to appreciate the multiplicity of approaches that are needed to respond to their varying life circumstances and interests. I have come to value speaking directly to the tensions between work and women's roles as mother, caretaker, and partner. My clients have taught me to recognize what brings meaning to their lives and how this meaning unfolds within countless daily interactions that take place in their relationships. These observations have been useful for developing new methods to enhance client's lives by helping them pay closer attention to performing the next small steps that will contribute to the creation of their careers. These small steps are the simple things that are woven into daily life, such as making a phone call, meeting with someone who is in the field of work that is of interest to them, researching work possibilities on the web, learning from friends and associates on social networking sites like Facebook or Linked In or talking to a neighbor about a car dealership that might be hiring. It is not uncommon that although these may be small steps, my clients may struggle to find the language and direction to support their next moves. Once they are able to engage this process, then each subsequent act, such as following up with a phone call or visiting with a potential employer, provides new information that then informs their next move. The career or work-search narrative unfolds within a web of relationships, because it is together that we work. The multifaceted social project of work and the process of discovering one's fit and direction bequeaths a prodigious social dance, and as in any dance, it is expressed as a series of related moves.

Careering: A Definition

In this dissertation, the term *careering* is proposed as a language tool to begin to expand our understanding of the limitations of career, while encouraging a broader and more relevant way of defining one's work trajectory in today's widely expanding social sphere.

As I listen to clients' work narratives, I often find that they highlight traditional interpretations of career: a linear progression of one's working or professional life. In the face of this powerful and widely accepted concept from which many of us draw to establish meaning in our lives, many of my clients struggle to save face as they recognize that their working lives are a far cry from mirroring this "linear progression." They frequently describe themselves as being on the "short end of the stick" by stating that they do not measure up or have not arrived to where they believe they should be in their careers. My clients often attempt to challenge and rework traditional understandings of career and struggle to find ways to place their work and life experience in a more favorable light. In order to develop the term *career* into a more viable and accessible concept, I chose to extend the term into a verb; the result, *careering*, emphasizes action and process. Related to my use of social constructionist theory, I am conceptualizing this action and process as occurring in relationship. The term *careering* currently exists in the English language as a term used to refer to barreling ahead at full speed. Although many of my clients might agree that they can identify with this aspect of careering, it is my hope instead to provide a useful extension of *career*.

The use of the term *careering* places value on active engagement, but rather than emphasizing the individual's journey as occurring separately, careering is seen as emerging through relationship in daily life. *Career* inherently implies future goals, whereas *careering* infuses *career* with the moment, thereby providing a wider stage for a range of performative possibilities to unfold. It is here, in the moment and at the site of relationship, that one's career unfolds.

The following serves as the definition of *careering* for the purpose of this study:

- Approaching one's career as an ongoing process throughout one's life
- A flexible criteria for success
- A relational view of oneself as continuously being constructed throughout one's daily social interactions
- Small performative steps and engaged reflexivity with each move.

In summary, careering is *performative, relational, flexible, and ongoing.*

By introducing careering—a dynamic, responsive declaration that situates career in relationship—it is my hope that the female careerist will be better equipped with the language and imagination needed to assist her in the conception and ongoing development of her work. Rather than weak attempts being made to explain gaps in her resume, she will be better able to describe her career path to a potential employer without the apology. The computer programmer will have her finger on her company's pulse, predicting the next buyout, and has already established contacts in a competing company. The mom who has been home with her children will see this as relevant part of her career as she develops her entrance into the paid workforce. The manager will understand that her new employee has the potential to enhance her sense of direction and meaning through their interactions. Relationship and love will no longer be designated to the sidelines waiting at the end of the day but will be relevant to the practical undertakings of any job.

The Author's Stories

In this section, I situate myself within the dynamic milieu of career discovery by telling two personal stories that I deem relevant to my own careering. Just as the participants in this careering study told stories to each other, I do the same here. I tell my stories in the present tense in order to create the experience of a performance. My stories are performed with my younger selves (ages 10 and 18) sharing a story with my current self. This choice creates a generational process between my younger and older selves, mirroring the intergenerational component of my study.

Listening to my mother's stories.

***Remembering*: *Age 10*.** I am in the kitchen with my mother while she is preparing dinner. I sit on the stool next to the counter while she is busy cooking. She is telling me a story about her final day at her job, where she helps kids who have big problems. She is smiling and also sad while she talks about how all the kids lined up to say goodbye to her. They have made her gifts. She speaks about how she cried and how some of the kids cried. I want to help like she does.

Current reflections. As a young girl, around the age of 10, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to be a counselor when I "grew up." I remember listening, during that time, to my mother's stories about her work as a nurse in a psychiatric inpatient hospital. She often included an element of humor and delight as she talked about the children she worked with and particularly the times they would get into trouble. I could see in her expressions the care and value she brought to her work. My eyes were opened to a world of meaning as she experienced it, and this then became meaningful to me. Imbedded in these stories were challenges and discoveries that intrigued me and influenced my own career trajectory of becoming a psychotherapist (K. J. Gergen, Lightfoot, & Sydow, 2004 [see Appendix B]).

I also remember around the same time period going to my school counselor and having the experience of the one being helped. This involved telling my own stories about my fourth grade teacher and the challenges I was facing in dealing with her. I found it exciting to give voice to my experience. I remember the warmth and intelligence of the counselor as he listened to my stories and helped me understand my circumstance. In looking back, I now recognize how intrigued I was becoming early on with social relationships and how these relationships enhanced my understanding of helping, being helped, and being part of something larger than myself. Retrospectively, I can see I experienced stories, perhaps as many children do, as weaving an invitation to a possible future self. Upon reflection, I now recognize that stories shared in personal relationships can provide powerful venues for discovering ourselves. These discoveries can become significant contributions to creating our working lives and serve as a form of careering.

Considering relationships as the site of knowledge generation and identity development is a primary tenet of social constructionism and serves as the ballast in this dissertation for reconceptualizing career. Within social constructionist philosophy, the everyday social practice of storytelling among people is understood as a central aspect of

one's identity development. By recognizing the self as being constructed moment-to-moment rather than the result of a lifelong, historical creation, our social interactions become a resource for knowing real possibilities that exist in life and, more specifically, in work. The story told here is, on the one hand, an example of a common sharing between mother and daughter and, on the other hand, a determinative chapter for the development of my sense of future and meaning as a young girl which eventually became my career path.

On stage.

***Remembering*: *Age 18*.** I am in my first year of college and my music professor informs me that he is directing a community musical theatre production, *The Threepenny Opera* (Brecht, 1928/1960). He suggests that I audition for the play, and I agree to do this. I have little to no experience as an actor, and I am nervous. I audition by singing *Summertime* and reading lines. I am chosen to play the part of Jenny, who is a "working girl" in the play. I find playing this role challenging and exciting. The more I perform her character, the more I expand possibilities for interacting in my relationships and in my life. Becoming someone so different from the way I know myself creates an experience of freedom and an appreciation for people's different social circumstances. Jenny as a character is both passionate and tough as she deals with her social position and limited access to opportunities.

Current reflections. I had not anticipated joining a theatrical production as a college student nor had I imagined stepping into the shoes of Jenny as a character. I found myself on stage singing, dancing, and brawling with the beggars and thieves in the streets of London. At this time in my life, I did not have an understanding of the social dilemmas presented in 1928 by dramatist Bertolt Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera*, although I developed an appreciation for the play's commentary on bourgeois society and my character Jenny's seeming lack of apology. Brecht (1928/1960) notes, in his tips for actors, that

> these ladies are in undisturbed possession of their means of production. But for that very reason they must not give the impression of being free. For them democracy does not grant that freedom which it does to all those from whom the means of production can be taken away. (p. 105)

This "undisturbed possession of their means of production" was to remain hidden. As prostitutes, they were not to let on about their "freedom." They had "job security" in satisfying the insatiable needs of the members of bourgeois society.

As a young actor, I considered Jenny's identity a far cry from who I believed I was at that time. I was a white young woman who had grown up middle class in post-World War II United States, with both parents educated and in medical careers. My circumstances in 1976 appeared entirely different than Jenny's, as I was living in a time of economic expansion and choice and was situated in a family that was able to offer these privileges. I had been given the message that "I could do it all." Feminism had

made great strides in increasing women's opportunities in the United States, yet perhaps Jenny and I had more in common than I was able to recognize at that time and can now see more clearly.

As a woman, I also faced some of the same provocations that were handed to Jenny almost 300 years ago, when *The Threepenny Opera* (Brecht, 1928/1960) was first published and performed as *The Beggar's Opera* (Gay, 1969). Jenny's "undisturbed possession" offered a strategy for working with the complex forces I encountered as I developed my own economic independence. She entered my life as a timely contributor for constructing my own meaningful narratives of power and social membership. Through performing Jenny, I learned to incorporate a lack of apology previously unfamiliar to me. I remember having a sense of freedom as I moved across the stage and sang "and they haven't the least idea who I may be" (Brecht, 1928/1960, p. 24). I believe that the role of Jenny helped prepare me for understanding the complexity of women's role in society and the performative nature of my own power. *The Threepenny Opera* is a musical satire about social class and the ensuing economic inequity through the eyes of thieves and whores as they encounter bourgeois society. With irony and humor this play brings into question who the real thieves and whores are, as the workings of bourgeois society are exposed. These themes gave rise to the questions "Who has the power in society?" and "How do I, as a woman in today's world express, or *perform* the power that I have?"—questions which remain salient and of interest to me today.

Performance, whether in the form of a play or the daily moments we "perform" ourselves, suggests that the way we engage socially or on stage is a form of communication and an integral method for creating social meaning. Norman Denzin calls for "performance-based human disciplines [that] can contribute to radical social change" (2003, p. 3). These performances can serve to construct social alternatives (Turner, 1988). *The Threepenny Opera* (Brecht, 1928/1960) stands as one social performance that has spoken to and moved many through out the past 300 years. From the perspective of my own careering, being an actor in *The Threepenny Opera* heightened my sensitivity to the realities women face in society. Although presented in a Machiavellian manner, these realities informed me of a performative reality I would face in my own career. My younger self of 18 can now inform my older self as I appreciate retrospectively my courage to be an actor and to play the role of Jenny. Telling the story about my participation in *The Threepenny Opera* gives voice to a younger self. As I listened to myself at 18, I found heart in my courage and again in the character of Jenny as I faced the challenge of this creative project, my Ph.D. dissertation, as well as the continued risks I take in the ongoing development of my work as a psychotherapist.

Chapter II
Narratives of the "Woman Worker": The Problem and Her Liberation

Common narratives regarding women and work populate the women's stories in this study and play a central role in the social construction of women and work in society. This section sets the stage for this careering study by briefly introducing some of the more influential of these narratives while also inviting the reader to imagine a range of women actors and their diverse expressions of work. In 1859, feminist writer and reformer Caroline Dall, writing about women's abilities in her book, *Women's Right to Labor*, declared,

> I go farther, and state boldly, that women have from the beginning, done the hardest and most unwholesome work of the world in all countries, whether civilized or uncivilized; and I am prepared to prove it. I do not mean that rocking the cradle and making bread is as hard work as any, but that women have always been doing man's work, and that all the outcry society makes against work for women is not to protect women, but a certain class called ladies. (2005, pp. 33-34)

Images of women and their work create a diverse collage, expanding and contrasting over the past 2 centuries to include women laboring in their homes and on their farms, cooking, cleaning, making cheese, working the fields, tending children and neighbors in need of help; young women leaving their family farms to work in the factories in New England in the late 1800s with hopes of expanding their life opportunities[1] (Dublin, 1993); women who immigrated from Europe to North America at the turn of the 19th century and provided cheap labor working in sweat shops in the garment industry in New York[2] (Baxandall & Gordon, 1995; DeBell, 2001; Miles 1988; Thompkins, 1996); and women whose families were enslaved and brought to the Americas from Africa and who, with their acquired freedom, were presented with only low wages, hard labor, and domestic work possibilities[3] (Omolade, 1987). Also included in this collage are women

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[1]In New England, during the years of 1830 to 1860, tens of thousands of single young women left their family farms in search of paid work in factory towns. Their experience is reflected in the voice of one young woman, Lucy Ann, who worked in a New England factory and proudly shared in a letter to her cousin, "I have earned enough to school me awhile, & have not I a right to do so, or must I go home, like a dutiful girl, place the money in father's hands, & then there goes all my hard earnings" (Dublin, 1993, p. 21). Sally Rice, another young woman from the same time period wrote,

> I am now most 19 years old. I must of course have something of my own before many more years have passed over my head and where is that something coming from if I go home and earn. nothing…you may think me unkind but how can you blame me for wanting to stay here. I have one life to live and I want to enjoy myself as well as I can while I live. (p. 21)

[2]Women immigrants were and still are vulnerable to accepting the lowest paying jobs with the worst conditions (Baxandall & Gordon, 1995). In addition, women have consistently been paid less than their male counterparts. One example of wage discrepancy based on figures drawn from 1900 is that of men earning $5.00 to $8.00 per week for manufacturing while women who worked in the textile mills earned $2.00 per week (Thompkins, 1996).

who grew up in privileged homes during the early 1900s and pursued education and careers in medicine or law; women who worked for a wage for a brief period as secretaries before they were married and women who were paid nominally as teachers while teaching became a low-paying, feminized profession (Scott, 1993); woman who worked during wartime, echoing the voice of Rosie the Riveter in the United States, saying "We Can Do It"[4] (McKnight, 2005); women who fought to keep their jobs after wartime and those who lost their jobs after the war and returned to domesticity[5] (Milkman, 1982; Thebaud, 1994); and woman who became modern consumers for the family, wageless and working at home[6] (Cott, 1994).

More recently, images of woman and work include women from the third world emigrating to developed countries to provide care for children or the elderly,[7] women who are successfully climbing the corporate ladder (Halpren & Cheung, 2008; Rimm, Rimm-Kaufman, Rimm, 1999), women who grew up in poverty who forged ahead and created financial success in many different industries, woman who have been in and out of the job market while also spending time at home with their children and managing their families day to day needs, women who have forged political careers, women who fly commercial airplanes, and women engineers who design spacecraft.

No one picture can capture the complexity of working women's lives historically or currently, and no one story accounts for all that has occurred or is occurring for women and their work; meanwhile, powerful narratives have shaped our understanding of

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[3]After slavery, African American women joined the labor force three to four times more frequently than white women, and around 1880, approximately 50% of all African American women were in the labor force in comparison the 15% of white women. In addition, wages for African American women were lower and work opportunities significantly limited (Omolade, 1987).

[4]With the onset of World War II, large numbers of women moved into government and industry jobs as part of their patriotic imperative (Harrington, 2003). As the economic need emerged to fill large numbers of jobs during wartime, almost overnight, women became valued contributors (McKnight, 2005).

[5]Following World Wars I and II, the access women in Europe and the United States had to "men's jobs" while men were at war did not remain available (Milkman, 1982; Thebaud, 1994).

[6]The modern woman was born out of this time along with the expectation that her domain remained primarily in the home. Women were targeted as the primary consumers for their families, whereas men were expected to be the primary breadwinners. During the 1920s, the modern advertising industry took off, and women's "choice, freedom, and rationality" (Cott, 1994, p. 174) became industries' targets for advertising. The advertising industry took feminist emphasis on freedom and choice and embedded these values into the individual consumer (p. 174).

[7]With women's roles being tied to the care needs of the family and community, and a lack of comparable male participation on the home front, in order to pursue careers, many women have turned to women from the third world for help with caring for their children and their parents. Millions of women have migrated to help more affluent women meet the care needs of their families. Frequently these women that migrate also leave behind their own families and either hire help or depend on extended family for help with the care needs they are leaving behind (Parrenas, 2001). These "global care chains" are a significant part of the global landscape of woman and work. Hochschild (2009) argues that immigrant help "does not enable affluent women to enter the workforce; it enables affluent men to continue avoiding the second shift" (p. 9).

how women are seen in society and the meaning of their working lives—most notably, society's preoccupation with a gendered treatment of labor in the 19th century, which set in motion the idea that women "naturally" belonged at home, caring, cooking, and cleaning, whereas men's place was in the public arena of paid work and civic engagements (Scott, 1993; Sumner, 1974). Although, previous to this time period, women undoubtedly earned a wage as housekeepers, dressmakers, nursemaids, or selling food that they produced at home, not until the industrial revolution was public concern expressed about the incompatibility of womanhood and women's wage-earning activities (Collins, 2003). A gendered division of paid work defined *women's work* as domestic, mirroring women's labor at home.

As society's commitment to women's domesticity remained firm, and wage earning became separated from the home, women were considered unsuited for paid work other than for brief periods of time, typically before marriage. At this point, the "women worker" became problematic in that "she was an anomaly in a world where wage labor and family responsibilities had each become full-time and spatially distinct jobs" (Scott, 1993, p. 400). The *family wage*, also a powerful work-related narrative, became established during the 1800s, guaranteeing that men would have access to earning higher incomes than women, because men were deemed the economic leaders of their families. The types of employment historically available for women typically involved domestic tasks such as sewing, laundry, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly for low wages, while men were paid more for their labor. In addition, privileged men worked in higher paying industries to which women had limited or no access, such as medicine, business, and government. The family wage systematically stripped women of their value as labor participants and solidified their economic dependency on men. Because women's work paid less, women were then perceived as less valuable workers, which, in turn, reinforced a rationale for paying women less wages (Sumner, 1974). This circular logic has continued to be a factor to this day as value is attributed to some members of society and their work but not to others.

Historically, the use of women in the work place became a way for employers to contain costs and therefore devalue certain types of work. In the United States, employers were known to specify age, skill level, gender, race and ethnicity when advertising for employees. Certain jobs were often described with presumed gendered qualities, using terms such as *delicate*, *patience*, *nimble fingers* and *endurance* pertaining to feminine traits, whereas *physical strength* and *skill* signified masculine traits. Work therefore was designated to either gender based on what was considered appropriate and "natural" (Baxandall & Gordon, 1995). Business decisions were made to hire women into certain industries as a way to cut costs. One such example occurred in Massachusetts, where the shoe industry in the1870s altered its methods of production to transfer work from men to women. By using threads instead of tacks and by introducing cutting machines, the work was considered within women's capacity. In this instance, women's wages were then set lower than the men that they replaced (Baxandall & Gordon, 1995). Another historical example of feminizing certain types of work occurred during the years 1830-1840, when part of the educational debate involved utilizing women as teachers as a means to contain costs (Scott, 1993). To this day, teachers are predominantly women, who, many would argue, are underpaid and therefore are undervalued for their societal contributions.

Gendered interpretations of work persist in our current climate of work. Joyce Fletcher (1996), a senior research scholar at the Stone Center at Wellesley College, argued that that gender stereotypes manifests in the work place where men and work are perceived as strong, and women and relationships conjure images of dependency and weakness. Fletcher's research on gender in the work place demonstrated that although work organizations readily acknowledge the importance of collaborative teamwork and relational skills, these very qualities expressed at work can be seen as unbefitting. Fletcher suggested that even though a relational orientation may be aligned with an organization's stated goals, relational practices in the workplace are still considered "women's work." In Fletcher's words, "certain behaviors 'get disappeared'—not because they are ineffective but because they get associated with the feminine, relational, or so-called softer side of organizational practice" (p. 3).

Judi Marshall (1989), in her research on women managers, incorporated psychologist David Bakan's (1966) framework of human functioning and his use of the concepts *agency* and *communion*. Bakan argued that the principals of agency and communion mirror commonly interpreted male and female polarities in society. He described *agency* as changing the world through directed action, or doing, and *achievement* and *communion* as seeking union and cooperation with others. For Bakan, the vision of "agency mitigated by communion" (as cited in Marshall, 1989, p. 75) is a more balanced direction for society to move towards, whereas Marshall (1989) argued that "communion enhanced by agency" is likely to make more sense for women relating to their personal and professional lives (p. 75). In her research, Marshall initially envisioned change whereby women could be increasingly valued for their social contributions. She later developed a broader social vision whereby "we all revitalize our appreciation of communal modes of being" (p. 241).

Upon review of several autobiographies of both men and women, psychologist Mary Gergen (2001) noted that the men's stories were situated around themes of power while the women's stories were organized around love. Men and women appeared to "be bound to separate pieces of the world that, if somehow put together, would create new possibilities (M. Gergen, 2001, p. 68). In keeping with Marshal's findings, M. Gergen noted that rather than the women in these stories needing to become more like men, perhaps it was the men who were more in need of a diversified story line. The men's biographies focused primarily on a linear version of their career success, modeling the classic heroic journey, and failed to combine other aspects of life and relationship that bear significant importance. The women's stories were more complex than the men's stories and revealed a web of relationships and less differentiation between personal and work-related endeavors. Although gendered story lines sustain a familiar form for much of society, stretching the bounds where both men and women's stories stop short offers the possibility of challenging this normative practice and perhaps introducing a wider range of work and life performances.

Economist Julie Nelson and sociologist Paula England (2002) challenged the division of work and love and the commonly held feminist belief that "marketization inevitably leads to a degradation of social connections" (p. 1). They called for "fresh ways of thinking about love and work" and proposed the question, "Can work for a wage be an act of love, or is it inherently alienating?" (p. 1). The separation of work from one's

personal life has been recognized as problematic, and attempts to re-envision something more whole have become part of many academic and personal discussions. Nelson and England suggested that love, which is designated to society's private sphere, also has a place at work. Religious studies scholar Anne Klein (2002) inquired into the relationship between her academic writing, which she considers "work," and love. In her poetic treatise, she first noted "love's affinity with wholeness distinguishes it from work's tendency to divide a subject from herself" (p. 133). Through a reflective, meditative process, Klein discovered a "new sensuality and power in living, languaging, and the love of both" (p. 142). Attempting to undo gendered stereotypes of *male* and *female* at work and at home and to relate work with love expands men's and women's performative options in all spheres of society.

During the 20th century, women's equal rights on par with men has served as a ballast for women as they have sought to craft and, for many, rework their place in society. The idea of equality has lead many women towards libratory achievements and provided a challenge to meet or rise above. Achieving equality for women has certainly not reached an endpoint or conclusion but instead remains open-ended, and depending on different women's circumstance, some more than others may feel they are closer to this goal.

Given several decades of two women's movements,[8] and the evolution of a third,[9] most would argue that the picture of women in the developed world has changed significantly, while at the same time, many agree that significant distance remains to be covered to address successfully women's right to equal pay and women's representation in all working professions (National Women's Law Center, 2004). England pointed out that large numbers of women have become upwardly mobile by entering professions such as law, medicine, and business. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2010) found that young women currently surpass men in the importance that they place on having a career or profession that is high paying.

Although women's ambition and presence in certain professions is certainly notable, England (2010) also argued that little has changed when it comes to the devaluation of types work dominated by women; for example, wages remain low for care-related labor such as teaching, childcare, and care work in nursing homes (England, Budig & Folbre, 2002). England (2010) argued that the gender revolution has been

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[8]The first wave of feminism, also known as the suffragists' movement, occurred during the 19th century and into the early 20th century in Europe and the United States. Citizens of European countries and the United States, primarily women, worked tirelessly towards gaining women's right to vote, while also focusing on women having access to education and vocations.

During the 1960s and '70s and into the '80s, the second wave of feminism ignited through out the United States and parts of Europe, aiming for liberation from oppressive gendered norms and fighting for participation in all aspects of society on par with men (Blau, Duplessis, & Snitow, 1998; Friedan, 1963; Tong, 1998)

[9]Feminism today is considered to be in its third wave and is aligned with postmodernism. As a movement, one might say that feminism currently is less directed by a collective idea of a similar oppressed subject and instead includes diverse ideas and expressions of the needs of women in today's complex world (Findlen, 2001).

uneven and has stalled and that a need exists for "future feminist organizing" in order to "revitalize change" (p. 163).

Although the status of women's progress and gender equality are up for debate, crossing this terrain over the past several decades has resulted in numerous popular narratives such as *work-life balance*, the *glass ceiling*, and the *stay-at-home mom*. In these phrases, we find the tensions and forces that are at play as women develop their careers. The struggle for balance places women's care for their families and themselves on one end of the scale and women's careers on the other side.[10] As women set out to discern the balance of their lives, they may also encounter unseen forces that stand in their way, or, in other words, they find themselves hitting the proverbial glass ceiling (Eyring & Stead, 1998). *Washington Post* executive Leslie Morgan Steiner (2006), as editor of the book *The Mommy Wars,* presented a number of different women's narratives and the two contrasting camps in which they find themselves: those who are career minded and those who see their primary role as raising their children. It seems that for women, the binary of home life and work continues to provide competing narratives that are experienced as separate or on opposite ends of a scale.

Although the sum of familiar historical narratives—sex segregation, women's domesticity and incongruence with work, the family wage and women being paid less than men, liberation from these limitations, equality, work-life balance, the glass ceiling, and being a stay-at-home mom—all provide ways of understanding and making sense of women's working lives, I have found evidence that many women are discovering a range of performative options for negotiating this shifting terrain. In today's postmodern world, women are creating a menagerie of new narratives and performative displays that are helpful for making sense of the old and the new as they strive to live meaningful lives that include the richness of both work and home.

The following is a collection of working women's narratives I have heard more recently from clients, friends, or in literature on women and work:

- women striving for equality politically and/or searching for ways to conduct their lives with their partners so that their experience becomes equal in the sharing of home and work demands
- women setting out to be successful within society's structures and rising to leadership positions in companies or government, paying little attention to the discourse of equality and fairness
- women continuing to experience overwhelming discrimination at their jobs when they become pregnant, take family leave with the birth of a child, or take time off to care for a dying parent, while society remains ambivalent towards the "woman worker" and her concurrent responsibilities at home (Gornick & Meyers, 2003)
- women who express frustration about men's lack of engagement on the home front and see this as the larger political issue of men resistance to shifting their role to include caring (Orloff , 2002)

[10] Whereas women have increased their participation in the labor market, men have not matched this increase through their participation in the unpaid work of maintaining a household and caring for children (Lewis, 2009). Sociologist Arlie Hochschild called this women's "second shift" (1989, p. 4).

- women questioning the validity of becoming equal in a tyrannical system that also oppresses men (Greer, 1999)
- women who are enacting new narratives by playing with a variety of expressions that challenge common historical stories for women and work, such as a woman who dresses in a way that accentuates her full, pregnant belly while attending an important board meeting, a woman who blogs voraciously about new ways of understanding her role in society while at the same time playing the part she is expected to at her engineering company, or a woman who works for an IT company and leaves during her lunch break to belly dance in public settings

Today, the designation "woman worker" has undoubtedly evolved to include a much wider range of expressions and, quite literally, occupations. It is also evident that men, women, and work organizations continue to adhere to a gendered lens at work and home. Although some common work narratives have been introduced here it is fair to presume that both women and men interpret these narratives in countless ways in their lives. With my clients and in my personal life, I have observed multiple creative performances that stretch beyond gendered stereotypes, suggesting that much remains to be learned through local observations. Some of the social constructions of work and career are examined more broadly in the following chapter *Social Constructions of Career in the 20th and 21st Century: Birth, Death and Transfiguration.*

Chapter III
Social Constructions of Career in the 20th and 21st Century: Birth, Death and Transfiguration

Within the industrialized nations of the world in the 20th century, the notion of career has served as a central organizing theme in the development of personal identity. Within most social classes, except, perhaps, for the very wealthy or the very poor, individuals have crafted their lives and judged their successes and failures in terms of their careers. While having a career has been a given for most men, women have faced a struggle to become recognized as capable and relevant within most professions. In the modern world, career has also served as a central organizing theme for much of society. The emergent social stability that results from linking people to labor markets in ways that create personal meaning while at the same time benefiting working organizations is a hallmark of the modernist world (Young & Collin, 2000b). Although it is true that one's career has and continues to offer a person a vantage point for establishing identity and for making sense of the world, many would also agree that the scaffolding of the concept of career is irreversibly breaking down; for most people the experience of *having a career* now is a far cry from common career definitions that emphasize "consecutive progressive achievement" ("Career," 2011, def. 3) or "a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling" (def. 4) . In a recent *New York Times* article, Reid Garrett Hoffman, the founder of *Linked In*, a popular worldwide Internet professional networking site describes the changes in the idea of career:

> The old paradigm of climb up a stable career ladder is dead and gone. No career is a sure thing anymore. The uncertain, rapidly changing conditions in which entrepreneurs start companies is what it's now like for all of us fashioning a career. Therefore you should approach career strategy the same way an entrepreneur approaches starting a business. (as cited in T. L. Friedman, 2011, p. A27)

Questions about career and its dwindling utility have led those in the career development field to prod and rework its meanings. For a number of years, career theory has been recognized as limited and inadequate and is due to be "laid to rest" or in need of a "good shot in the arm" (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989, p. 7). Mark Savickas (1995) argues that "vocational psychologists need to face the challenge of formally addressing the artificial diversity and untreated redundancy" (p. 13) so prevalent in career theory and research related to career choice and development.

Audrey Collin and Richard Young (2000) point out the vast changes occurring even in relatively stable societies leading to fragmented work lives. Because of these unstable conditions people may "increasingly make sense of their actions in and across various domains of their lives, and link them together into meaningful sequences, in the shorter term as projects, and in the longer term as their careers" (p. 294). Thus the reframing career into a more relevant construct that provides coherence across people's lives while also providing meaning presently and into the future is a relevant and important project in itself.

Douglas Hall claims that "career is dead" (Hall & Associates, 1996, p. 1) but rather than construing this as an endpoint, also challenges us to reinvent career into a dynamic, relational concept. This 'new' career values traditional skill development yet emphasizes the significance of relational skills that support interdependent learners and teachers in the work place (Hall & Associates, 1996; Kram, 1996). Hall and co-author Phillip Mirvis (1996) turn to the Greek god Proteus found in Homer's *Odyssey* as a metaphor for making sense of the 'new' career. Depending on the demands of the situation, Proteus, a shape shifter, is able to change form as needed in response to different circumstances by becoming a panther, a rampaging wild boar, a torrent of water, or a tree with soaring branch tops. As a worker setting out to meet the challenges of a variable work environment, the protean person's career path encompasses peaks and valleys, flexible moves, and an idiosyncratic course that is unique to each person rather than a presumed career pattern similar for everyone. From this viewpoint, Hall and Mirvis find that success is determined by one's own criteria rather than external determinants. Michael Arthur and Denise Rousseau (1996a) challenge the historical notion of a "bounded" (p. 3) career in which the careerist and the organization are steadily bound together, and instead believe that careers are now boundaryless and unfold in a variety of employment settings. In the case of a boundaryless career, one's career development becomes one's own responsibility, while organizations are challenged to provide rewarding work that will draw talented employees**.** Joyce Fletcher's (1996) interpretation of boundaryless careers highlights *relational practices,* or "growth fostering relational interactions" (p. 114), highlighting interdependence marked by mutuality and reciprocity. She emphasizes that two-directional interactions are the most beneficial for employees' growth as well as for the company's. Fletcher's focus on relational practices challenges the notion of autonomous workers whose success rests solely on individual performance and instead shifts our awareness to relationships as the focus for personal learning and mutually beneficial growth. Karl Weick (1996) observes that as careers become boundaryless, career planning and hierarchical advancement are replaced with "improvisation and learning" (p. 41). Weick also suggests that in this new scenario, the career actor plays a strong role in the construction of the organization rather than solely adjusting to the needs of the organization.

Some have criticized the use of the term *career* for its ideological underpinnings, which render it an elitist term that excludes individuals' work experiences that do not unfold in a noticeable hierarchical progression (Blustein, 2001a, 2006; Blustein et al., 2008; Richardson, 2000; Young & Collin, 2000b). By questioning career and its underpinnings these critics have also questioned the evaluation of certain career narratives as relevant and others as irrelevant. Career narratives of success that reflect traditional notions of better work and more money take precedence over less linear narratives of interrupted career paths and concerns regarding relationship, family needs, and social values. Mary Sue Richardson (2000), a psychoanalyst with an interest in vocational psychology, argues that historical renderings of *career* are "oversaturated with psychology and an individualistic view" (pp. 200-201). Instead of "career," she suggests moving forward by using the term *work practices*. She also points out that the notion of career marginalizes those who engage in unpaid work, typically women.

Limiting the meaning of career to those involved in paid, upwardly mobile work makes it more difficult for those who are not so engaged to access positive self-esteem, which is linked to a successful traditional career. In addition, Richardson (1993) argues that career is founded on individualism, which, in turn creates an approach to work that is essentially self-centered; this self- centeredness is then reinforced in society. Similarly, Richard Young and Ladislav Valach (2000) also emphasize the relationship of "career" to individualism, which has been reinforced since the onset of industrialization. Because of this, "career" is inextricably linked to market-driven consumption. They believe that this view needs to be challenged as a given societal trajectory.

Career theory was developed primarily through research on men of European American decent from the middle class; this orientation presumes that people have a degree of choice as to their career and the resources to pursue these choices. The relative lack of choice of marginalized members of society has been largely ignored (Blustein, 2006; Blustein et al., 2008; D. Brown, 2002; Richardson, 1993). In response to this theoretical trend, David Blustein developed a *psychology-of-working* framework, with the intent of creating a more inclusive approach for understanding work and the experiences and needs of those working in today's society (2006; Blustein et al., 2008). Some of the recommendations for construing work that have evolved out of the *psychology-of-work* perspective are to integrate mental health and work-related counseling practices rather than treating these as separate and discrete; foster empowerment by providing clients with the necessary skills and emotional resources; and foster critical consciousness for clients and counselors in order to enhance understanding of the economic, cultural, and sociopolitical factors that privilege some members of society and deter others (Blustein et. al., 2008).

A brief overview of the concept of career in its current state reveals that some believe that it is best left behind (Blustein, 2001a, 2006; Blustein et al., 2008; Richardson, 2000), whereas others, in spite of its ambivalent and ambiguous state, believe it continues to be of use. Collin and Young (2000b) state that career "will continue into the future," and therefore, it is critical to "reframe our understanding of career" (p. 296). Although I am in agreement with the value of leaving this notion of career behind in attempts to create a more inclusive approach to understanding work, in this study, I have chosen to explore a reworking of "career" based on the prominence of this term in conversations I have had with clients and friends, as well as in the media. Before going into more depth regarding the re-workings of "career" and some of the postmodern contributions to career development methods, I first provide a brief overview of the development of the notion of career to elucidate this multilayered term and its varied constructions further.

Career Development History

Guidance, emancipation, and science. The notion of career[11] became more established during the later part of the 19th century with the onset of the industrial revolution and the development of large-scale industries. Overnight, cities became a gathering place for men and women who migrated from rural areas looking for work. These migrations signaled the closure of a primarily agricultural society and changed the nature of work by expanding occupational diversity (Herr, 2001). Bursting with technological inventions such as motion pictures, the phonograph, typewriters, adding machines, air flight, and the Model-T automobile, all made possible due to the processes of steel manufacture, oil refinement, and mechanization, the developed world was literally taking flight. It is important to note that while technological advancements and increased job possibilities were occurring, the remaining native people of the United States were being placed on reservations (Zinn, 1997), and advancement for some was a loss for others. In addition, during the first decade of the 20th century, 9 million immigrants, the largest number ever to be recorded, arrived in the United States, primarily from southern and eastern Europe (Bureau of the Census, 1961). Upon their arrival, many of these immigrants were met with discrimination, conditions of poverty, and the availability of only low-paying jobs with 10-12 hour work days, 6 days a week. Regarding education, at that time only 8% of the labor force had graduated from high school (DeBell, 2001).

In response to these astonishing social and occupational conversions as well as the accompanying poor work conditions, ensuing labor strikes, unsanitary living conditions, and social unrest, a larger liberal social vision developed, out of which emerged the field of vocational guidance (Stephens, 1970). A central tenet of this social vision was to establish an efficient and more humane industrial system based on an effective educational system. A comprehensive vocational guidance program was envisioned as a key element of this change in order to assist young people in their transition from school to work. In historian W. Richard Stephen's (1970) words, "the youth who has been carefully trained would also have to be carefully counseled into a suitable occupational niche" (p. xiv). Determining one's work trajectory had previously been guided by one's family, social standing, or community; now, it was argued that this decision required a more complex assessment of the different types of work available and the alignment of this knowledge with one's skills.

Within the spirit of social reform, Frank Parsons, author of *Choosing a Vocation*, published posthumously in 1909, created the first conceptual framework for making career decisions, and he is often credited with establishing the foundation for career development (DeBell, 2001; Whiston, 2003). At that time, Parsons (1909) was living in

[11] Although the terms *vocation* and *career* are often used interchangeably, *vocation* was used at the turn of the century to refer to occupational choice and originated from the belief that one's work was a religious calling. The use of the term *career development* became popular during the 1960s (Herr, 2001). Although *vocation* is still used for referring to individual's work, the term *career* is employed in this study, unless referring to an earlier time period.

Boston, where 75% of the city's population was made up of recent immigrants and large numbers of children lived on the streets, having been orphaned or abandoned by their families. For Parsons, a typical stroll down the street would have involved countless encounters with these children. His response to these conditions was to advocate tirelessly for a society based on the principles of freedom and human progress achieved through a mutual vision of shared control of industry. Parsons criticized the competitive free enterprise system, which, he believed, resulted in unfair working conditions while advocating for equal rights for all workers. He also challenged industrial monopolies to incorporate humane values (O'Brien, 2001; Zytowski, 2001). Parsons (1909) brought attention to the lack of resources available for young people in the area of education and, specifically, the absence of guidance for those transitioning into the work force. He observed,

> We guide our boys and girls to some extent through school and then drop them into this complex world to sink or swim as they can. Yet there is no part of life where the need for guidance is more emphatic than in the transition from school to work. (p. 4)

Parsons (1909) heralded the possibility for men and women[12] to identify a work trajectory for life and proposed that knowing oneself and matching this knowledge with an informed view of the job market would provide this opportunity. Although Parsons utilized the term *vocation*, which reflects Romanticism's notion of a religious-based calling, he advocated for a method rooted in the rationale of scientific modernism, which emphasizes prediction, efficiency, and control. He reinterpreted vocational choice as a scientific project benefiting both the individual and the organization. In Parsons's words, "a man would not get good results by using his cow to draw his carriage and his horse for dairy purposes" (p. 4); in other words, "our best abilities and enthusiasms must be united" (p. 5) with our daily work.

> Parsons (1909) developed a tri-part formula for choosing a vocation:
> In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources, limitations, and other qualities; (2) knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts. (p. 5)

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[12] Although rarely noted, Parsons attempted to address his theories to both men and women (Herr, 2001). In *Choosing a Vocation,* Parsons (1909) presents 17 case examples of people he worked with providing vocational development. Out of the seventeen cases, one was a woman, who, at the age of 18, clearly stated that she "would like to do something, something besides housework" (p. 146). She went on to explore three options: journalism, social work, and secretarial work. Her strongest interest lay in journalism, and she made her final decision to study journalism at the University of Wisconsin.

Parsons's (1909) scientific method of vocational choice, which promising to lay the foundation for "success and happiness" (p. 2) took hold during his time. In 1908, he established the Boston Vocation Bureau, which is considered the first formal institution of career counseling in the United States (Stephens, 1970). He passed away soon after this, but his vision remained. Towards the end of WWI the Smith-Hughes act was passed which played an integral role in establishing vocational guidance within the U.S. educational system (Pope, 2000).

The inception of vocational guidance at the turn of the century in a society bursting at the seams with technological expansions, a growing diverse population, and many social tensions with no immediate resolution provided many with the possibility of making a choice about the work they did while offering guidance for the necessary training to make those choices. It is therefore fair to say that vocational guidance began as a libratory social project with the hopes of delivering members of society out of squalid work and living conditions while also advancing society by means of workers making their most effective contributions. Parsons (1909) argued for a regulated economy that exhibited both shared responsibility and ownership of industry, which he referred to as *mutualism*, and he challenged "the current norms of society that result in the proliferation of both extreme wealth and devastating poverty" (O'Brien, 2001, p. 73). O'Brien argues that the field of career development has its origins in work for social change and stressed the importance of the ways that career counselors continue to engage these principals through their practice and research, enhancing individuals' abilities to "love and work in a meaningful way" (p. 74).

Testing, type-ing, and developmental tasks. During the first half of the 20th century, approaches to career development remained embedded in Parsons's tri-part formula, which became known as the *trait and factor theory* (D. Brown, 1990). At the same time, a solid alignment with the psychological testing movement was established as the primary method for determining an individual's traits in order to recommend the best fit for work. The development of the testing movement began during World War I, when the U.S. Army developed the Army Alpha Test, which was used to assess recruits for their cognitive and personality attributes (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). This test and similar other ones were made available to the general public after the war and were soon incorporated as primary tools for career development counselors. To this day, the combination of standardized testing and Parsons's (1909) tri-part formula serves as the primary fulcrum through which career development is practiced and conceptualized (Zucker, 2002).

During the mid-20th century, some career development theorists expanded on trait and factor theory in an attempt to elucidate *how* people make career decisions (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951; Holland, 1959; Roe, 1956; Super, 1953; Tiedeman, 1961). In 1951, Eli Ginzberg, an economist, in collaboration with psychiatrist Saul Ginsburg, sociologist Sidney Axelrad, and psychologist John Herma, set forth a career development theory based on psychological principals. They viewed choosing one's occupation as an irreversible developmental process occurring in early adulthood and involving multiple compromises in attempts to balance opportunity, aptitudes, and interests. Twenty years later, Ginzberg (1972) expanded this theory by recognizing that

occupational choice is a lifelong process requiring numerous adjustments based on changes in career goals and the evolving nature of the working world. Around the same time, vocational psychologist Donald Super (1953), drawing on trait and factor theory and developmental psychology, published his theory of career choice, notably construing career development as unfolding throughout one's life rather than occurring solely during the transition from high school or college. Super continued to expand and develop his theory and, in 1980, proposed the *life-span, life-space* approach to career development.

Life-span is the unfolding of one's career over time emphasizing a developmental perspective. Life-space includes contextual dimensions and addresses the variety of roles one might occupy such as being a parent, a community member, and a partner in a committed relationship. Applied to career counseling, Super's theory involves eliciting individuals' work narratives through conversation and psychological testing and then identifying patterns of meaning as a means to establishing one's self-concept. These self-concepts and the knowledge of patterns are used to discern one's ability to make congruent occupational choices throughout one's life (Super et al., 1996).

In developing her theory of occupational classification and personality, Anne Roe, a clinical psychologist and researcher became keenly aware of the importance of one's occupation in one's life. She wrote,

> I remember one man whose job was selling hot dogs at baseball games. He loved it because a lot of city hot shots knew him by name; it made him feel really important because the mayor called him by his name, and you know, this sort of thing. Even the very lowly type job meant a great deal in terms of the associations. That was eye opening. (As cited in Wrenn, 1985, p. 269)

Roe's background was not previously in the area of career development. When she was asked to research and write *The Psychology of Occupations* in 1956, she did not set out to create a text that could be applied in the counseling office. Instead she surveyed and classified the range of available occupations at that time. She established eight occupational groups, each with six levels based on degree of responsibility, capacity, and skill. She later noted that the occupational classification system she designed was ill suited for women, except for those with an uninterrupted career path. She suggested that women's unpaid work becomes relevant in her classification system (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990).

The search for effective and scientific methods for assessing individual traits was expanded in the late 1950s by psychologist John L. Holland (1959, 1985), who committed his life to developing a comprehensive theory of occupational choice. Holland, who spent time in the military as an induction interviewer, became convinced that "people fall into a relatively small number of types" (Weinrach, 1980, p. 407). Holland (1985) argued that vocational choice is an expression of personality and proposed a set of six personality types and environment fits: Artistic, Realistic, Investigative, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. His theory is based on the belief that "pairing of persons and environments leads to outcomes that we can predict and understand from our knowledge of the personality types and environmental models" (p. 2). Some believe that Holland developed "the most influential model of vocational

choice making that is currently in existence" (D. Brown, 2002, p. 6); others challenge Holland's theory of vocational choice for inadequately addressing women's career needs and the needs of other marginalized groups and not recognizing diverse life roles (Patton & McMahon, 1999).

The final theorist under discussion from this time period is particularly relevant to the topic of this dissertation: constructionism and postmodern careers. David Tiedeman is recognized as the first psychologist to apply constructivist epistemology to understanding careers (Duys, Ward, Maxwell, & Eaton-Comerford, 2008; Savikas, 2008; Tiedeman, 1963; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1999; Tiedeman & Peatling, 1977). Tiedeman's early contributions to the development of career theory began at Harvard University, where he became the Director of Harvard Studies in Career Development. During the early 1950s, Tiedeman became known for his application of multivariate statistics in the field of vocational psychology. He had begun asking the question, "So what?" in response to the statistical research he was conducting to discriminate among different occupational groups (Savikas, 2008). Tiedeman was questioning the relevance of statistical analysis when it came to understanding "how a particular individual decides upon an occupation or enables one to understand what work really means to the individual" (1952, p. 189). Tilling new ground outside of a positivistic career theory, Tiedeman "referred to his ideas about career as a language, describing his theory as a linguistic frame for career development" (Savickas, 2008, p. 220) and redefined self-concept as a process rather than a state.

Student counseling and guidance expert David Jepsen (2008), in his tribute to David Tiedeman, refers to him as his intellectual mentor and emphasizes Tiedeman's work as "constructing a philosophical framework for comprehending career" (p. 228). Jepsen suggests that many of Tiedeman's peers have chosen not to read his work because of its lack of empirical data. Jepsen challenges this view and argues that Tiedemen's ideas are "unique, paradoxical, abstract, challenging, and eminently practical" (p. 230) and are currently relevant "for sharpening a professional's understanding of career and career development" (p. 231). In their article, "Career Counseling in a Volatile Job Market: Tiedeman's Perspective Revisited," educational psychologist David Duys and colleagues (2008) highlight four concepts that are embedded in Tiedeman's original career model as being particularly relevant in today's volatile job market: (a) *career path recycling*, by which "revisiting prior job options is not interpreted as a career setback, resistance, or failure to make a commitment to a goal" (p. 235) but instead is viewed as a "normal recycling process" (p. 235); (b) *development in reverse*, which holds that as one "reconsiders a career path, prior decision making phases can be revisited" (p. 236) and views this as a "healthy process" (p. 236); (c) *nonlinear progress*, which proposes that "career can be non-linear" (p. 236), and one may move in and out of different stages of career development: and (d) *parallel streams*, which holds that parallel processes can be part of career development "when people simultaneously pursue different vocational interests" (p. 237). Normalizing a less linear and more fluid career process undoubtedly has value in a time when a traditional career is difficult to obtain and is also not preferable for many.

Although Tiedeman is recognized as "the first post-modern counselor"(Jepsen, 2008, p. 225) and as the "engineer of career construction" (Savickas, 2008, p. 217), it is

fair to say that the uptake of constructionist ideas into career counseling theory and method has been slow; as a field, the primary alliance has remained with a positivist paradigm and models of occupational choice and work adjustment that treat the self as object (Super, Savikas, & Super, 1996). In contrast, a social constructionist view defines the self as a social process.

To conclude this section I present Anna Miller-Tiedeman and David Tiedeman's (1999) imagined response from Parsons if he were to wake up in today's world:

> What? You are not still doing this match thing, even though valuable at times. Remember the winds of life continually blow and we have to bend with that change. Look how my life changed from 1854 to the time I made my transition. I did not follow the straight line, nor were all my decisions wise, but they all worked. Thank you for acknowledging my vision in 1908, now get on with process careering. (p. 26)

Social Constructionist Contributions to Career Development Theory and Practice

> The implications for our theory, research and practice, based on a different appreciation of action, language, context, relationship, meaning, culture, and career itself, are substantial.
>
> Young & Collin, 2004, p. 384

Whereas postmodern theories are well recognized in a number of disciplines such as organizational development, psychology, sociology, and education, the field of career development has been slow on the uptake of postmodern ideas. One might say that the field of career is behind the times based on changes that have occurred in the field of social sciences in general. Although the uptake of postmodern ideas may be slow, reductionist approaches to career development theory and practice charted in the 20th century are increasingly being challenged. Some agreement exists on the idea that approaching career solely within the tradition of logical positivism creates limitations for furthering our understanding of the complexities of having a career in today's world.

A growing number of advocates call for establishing a social constructionist dialogue within the field of career development (Arthur et al., 1989; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996a; Blustein, Palladino, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1999; Richardson, 1993; Savickas, 2002; Young & Collin, 1992, 2000a, 2004). Notably, postmodern contributions to career theory and practice are expanding our understanding of the construct of career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; Collin & Young, 2000; Hall, 1996) and diversifying our approaches to career development by integrating new career counseling methods such as narrative (Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1997; McIlveen & Patton, 2007; Peavey, 2000; Savickas, 2011) and social constructionist methods (Schutt, 2007; Young, Marshall, Valach, Domene, & Zaidman-Zait, 2011; Young & Valach, 2004). This section reviews applications of social constructionism to career theory and practice by examining the construct of career through a social constructionist lens, reviewing social-constructionist-oriented career research and reviewing several examples of postmodern career development methods.

Social constructionism: A good fit for career reconstruction. The use of social constructionist theory invites researchers and practitioners to listen closely to the experiences of those who are constructing their careers while rendering new interpretations of career. In Bluestein's et al. (2004) words, social constructionism allows for a "powerful means of locating scholarship close to those we seek to understand" (p. 424). In contrast, positivistic research examines career within the confines of the individual as a separate and classifiable entity. By construing the concept of career as a social process rather than a project of the separate individual, a different set of understandings evolve. In fact, career researchers are discovering that a social constructionist model "access[es] the parts that other approaches can not reach . . . [and] "provid[es] insights into dimensions of career that are often eclipsed through more positivistic approaches" (Cohen, Duberley, & Mallon, 2004, p. 419).

Richardson (1993) suggests that knowledge regarding people's working lives is most useful if it is produced locally as opposed to creating abstract theories that generalize about individual's careers. Savickas (1994) agrees with Richardson (1993), noting that postmodern approaches to studying careers allows researchers to shift their stance away from being "detached testers of theory" and towards being "participant observers" of actual accounts of workers as they describe "ordinary activities of everyday life" (p. 107).

Young and Collin (2004) argue that constructivisms,[13] which include both constructivist and social constructionist theories, are "particularly salient in contributing to the construction of career, as a construct in theory, research, and practice and people's lives" (p. 378) because of the following features:

> Meaning is constructed in a social, historical , and cultural context, through action and discourse in which we form relationships and community. These features allow us to address how career is constructed, to be critically aware of the process of career in its historical and cultural context, and to use career practice to inform career theory and research. (p. 378)

As interest in utilizing social constructionism as a research tool for expanding our understanding of career is mounting, the question arises: How does social constructionist theory contribute to this knowledge building? In considering the application of social constructionist theory, a more specific question is raised about the *constructions* of the concept of career, which are rarely examined and brought to the foreground for discussion. Social constructionist theory as a reflexive tool paves the way for these career discussions, exposing the constraints posed by presumed career constructs such as the

[13] In the field of career development and counseling the postmodern terms *constructivism* and *constructionism* are frequently used interchangeably. Although inconsistencies are found in the usage of the terms, in general, sources agree that *constructivism* refers to the construction of individual worlds through cognitive processes, whereas constructionism emphasizes *meaning making* and *reality* evolving through our social relationships.

individual, career choice, success, and a linear progression while creating new pathways for reinterpreting career.

The Emperor's New Suit: Undressing individuals and their careers.

> If we are to locate the successor to individualism, it seems, we must achieve a more radical departure. We must undermine the binaries in which we find ourselves subject to others' influence but fundamentally separated. We must locate a way of understanding ourselves as constituents of a process that eclipses any individual within it, but is simultaneously constituted by its individual elements.
>
> K. J. Gergen, 1999, p. 129

> The fundamental delusion of humanity is to suppose that I am here and you are out there.
>
> Yasutani, as cited in Aitken, 1982, p. 77

Making sense of a person's career life through the lens of the individual is common, and for many scholars stripping away the construct of the individual renders the concept of career figuratively naked. The popular children's tale, *The Emperor's New Suit* (Andersen, 1837/1897, comes to mind as a performative display of what occurs when a collective social practice is drawn into question.

The emperor in Hans Christian Andersen's (1837/1897) tale is swindled into paying for a new suit that is to be made from exceptionally beautiful cloth. He is told that when he is dressed in this cloth, the suit will be invisible to anyone that is "unfit for his office or unpardonably stupid" (p. 17). As it turns out, those who work closely with the emperor are unable to see the cloth but do not take the risk of admitting this. In the end, the emperor himself cannot see the cloth either, but he does not reveal this to anyone. When he is parading in front of his kingdom in his new suit, a young child exclaims, "But he has nothing on at all" (p. 21). The townspeople in turn agree with the child, when moments prior, they were praising the emperor's exceptional garments. In response, the emperor and his chamberlains proceed "with still greater dignity" (p. 20).

Similarly, as we exclaim that the individual and therefore career are not what we think they are, the concept of career as we typically know it begins to break down. Although some proceed with their understanding of career as the domain of the *separate self*, others are incorporating the socially constructed career and self.

By establishing *the self* as a socially constructed self, a social and relational framework for making sense of career begins to emerge. Given the notable absence of relating to careers as complex, ongoing social constructions involving multiple interactions with friends, teachers, media, literature, and coordinated systems this transition towards a relational interpretation of career poses some challenges. In addition, thinking and acting as individuals governs much of our lives in the West, and career—a Western concept, remains very much an individualist term. As we ponder ways to invite a socially produced view of our world, K. J. Gergen's (1991) suggestion is apropos: "First

bid a final adieu to the concrete entity of self, and then [to] trace the reconstruction of self as relationship" (p. 140).

Let us imagine a careerist as a portrait of a nicely dressed man or woman similar to what we might see in the achievement section of the newspaper. Whereas no individual's career exists solely in isolation, this image of a careerist betrays the complex sociality of one's career life. A social constructionist view of career expands beyond solo images of formal business attire while highlighting the process of career as a cascade of dynamic social connections. Based on this view, what images might best represent an individual's career? In order to accomplish this shift in perception, instead of a still portrait, imagine streaming video: we see a woman dressed casually, wearing jeans, and meeting with her colleague at the local coffee shop. The coffee shop is filled with people who are also working with others, but instead, they are online. In the corner, a group of students are studying together for their finals, preparing for their future careers. Zooming out and looking down the street, we see a manual laborer wearing steel-toed boots and working closely with several other people laying down a foundation for a new home. Several doors down, a woman wearing pajamas is working at her tech job from home. She is instant-messaging her colleagues, who are in London, working on the same project. Imagining individuals engaging a career and/or working through a social constructionist lens easily reveals its relational underpinnings.

Inviting to the foreground a social and relational view of career leads next to consider the use of language that fuels these social interactions. In order to do this, we turn our attention towards the social flow between people and, in particular, the languaged aspects of this flow. One of the most notable 20th-century philosophers, Ludwig Wittgenstein, argued that language is a constructive occurrence, which challenged the more commonly held belief that language serves to represent and therefore signify reality. Wittgenstein (1967) posited the notion of *language games*, maintaining that meaning is generated through *games* of daily social practices in which "only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning" (no. 173). Embedded in ordinary life and most notably our social relationships is where linguistic coordination occurs. Out of this coordinated conversational flow, we discover what our next move is. Wittgenstein suggested not thinking "of understanding as a 'mental process' at all. For that is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances do we say, 'Now I know how to go on'" (1953, p. 61).

If I, for example, say to my 3-year-old neighbor that I am looking for a diamond, we are likely to head out on a treasure hunt. If I pose the same question to a stranger on the street, she is likely to point me towards the local jeweler. How we use and understand language is a dynamic process, and notably, words carry different meanings in different social contexts; therefore, in order to make sense, words are best uttered in a specific context, thus following the rules of that particular game. If I were to go into a restaurant and order a diamond, I would likely receive a confused response and would be performing outside of the agreed-upon social rules of that game.

Upon reviewing the field of career development, notable *language games* become evident in the varying discourses used when discussing the concept of career and career theory and methods. Young and Collin (2004) lay out the field of career theory and practice in terms of primary discourses that "reflect the way we talk, think,

and act about career" (p. 379). These four discourses— "a dispositions discourse, a contextualizing discourse, a discourse of subjectivity and narrative and a process discourse" (p. 379)—provide a fluid frame for reflecting on the different ways that career is currently constructed and its diverse meanings.

The *dispositions discourse*, based on matching individual traits with specific occupations, remains true to the historical roots of career development and continues to be the most commonly referenced career method. Scientifically based psychometric tests are the most common method used to determine individuals' dispositions, typically referred to as *traits*. Although matching traits with occupations has helped many individuals find direction for their careers, this approach has limitations. The idea that the "truth" of an individual can be determined through scientifically validated tests, for example, makes it difficult for many individuals to challenge this information over time. If Maria is seeking a career direction, and she finds out through career testing that she is strong in social skills but scores low on analytical tasks, it is determined that she *is* social and *is not* analytical. In this case, Maria may be encouraged to pursue a career in social work and might be dissuaded from engineering. Although this is certainly a reasonable direction for Maria to go with her career, I would ask what comes from seeing traits as being essential, and how might this limit other possible directions for Maria.

A scientific discourse dominates the career-testing field; therefore, test results hold significant authority within individuals' identities. Testing thus becomes determinant, setting up individuals to adopt fixed ideas about who they are. Would it not be more beneficial for Maria to treat the test as one participant in a broader conversation about the direction of her working life? The testing paradigm presumes that if someone is "good" at something, then that is a preferred career direction. Similarly, if an individual takes an interest survey, it is presumed that the individual's strong interest in science, for example, is pointing him or her toward that career direction. Is it possible not to be good at something and yet still want to take that career direction? If someone has high anxiety when imagining conducting medical procedures and being exposed to bodily fluids and also struggles to get good grades in science classes, does that mean that she or he *should not* pursue a medical career? If someone imagines the tasks of an engineer incredibly boring and yet carries all As in math and science classes, does that mean this person *should* become an engineer, rather than go to cooking school to become a chef, or become a writer, even though she or he received a C in English class? Is it possible that even though someone may score low in certain skill areas, the person actually may not know yet that she or he could become skilled, for example, in math? Undoubtedly, many talented career counselors do not overemphasize test results and do help clients discover and perform new ways of being in the world; yet, despite talented career counselors and even well-designed tests, scientifically validated tests are authoritative. These test results often stick with people throughout their lives, *prescribing* who they are rather than serving as one source of information in a larger conversation. The area of testing serves as one poignant example of how certain uses of language can restrict potential identities for the career seeker.

Contextual interpretations of career. Introducing multiple contexts into the framework of career produces a considerable shift. Our focus on individuals' careers' expands to include the social, temporal, political, and historical dimensions. Both constructivism and social constructionism have been instrumental in facilitating this expansion into a contextualized understanding of career. Whereas contexts are expressed through multiple social interactions that in turn make up our society, we are then talking about a dynamic *social* context and therefore a social process. Among Young and Collin's (2004) four career discourses, the *contextualizing discourse* highlights these various social contexts and how they interact in the construction of career.

Although understanding career within a broader context is a more recent endeavor of the past couple decades, Young, Valach, and Collin (2002) purport that "virtually all theories of career choice and development attempt to account for context in one way or another" (p. 206). This consideration of context can been found dating as far back as Parsons's (1909) vocational guidance methods, which evolved out of his response to the complex social conditions at the turn of the century. Richardson (2001) notes that most counselors are especially interested in the different contexts of people lives, even though they may not address this directly.

More recently, considering contextualist explanations of career has opened up new ways for making sense of work and career in an increasingly complex world. In Savickas's (2002) constructivist approach to career, the individual actor remains central to his incorporation of a contextualist worldview that takes into consideration the interaction between individuals and a particular social ecology. Variables such as "physical environment, culture, racial and ethnic group, family, neighborhood and school" (p. 157) as well as the historical era are all considered by Savickas as elements of possible contextual dimensions.

Stead (2004) argues that in the application of a social constructionist lens to a contextualist view, people are seen as "the product of social processes and are not assumed to have a pre-determined nature" (p. 391). This view serves as an especially adept frame for deepening our understanding of career psychology as a cultural endeavor, whereby "relationships construct cultures and recursively cultures construct relationships" (p. 391). This recursive lens provides a powerful means for the career counselor to attune to some of the contextual factors that come into play for clients, such as barriers that arise for women and people of color. By assisting clients in deconstructing these barriers, alternative responses and new directions may unfold.

Contextual action theory (Young et al., 1996, 2002) is an especially relevant example of the applied use of social constructionism to the field of career theory and development. Tying in with Young and Vallach's (2004) ideas of *contextualizing* and *process discourse*, contextual action theory draws the connection between broader social and cultural contexts and individuals as a *shared process of co-construction*. Primarily used as a career research method, contextual action theory deepens our understanding of how this co-construction occurs and relates to career.

In contextual action theory, action is understood as a singular event occurring *in context*. From this perspective, career is understood as a series of multiple actions that lead to the accomplishment of necessary goals to move one's career forward in a

meaningful way. Each action is considered a social process, which in turn produces our social and work worlds. Notably, "it is the action itself that contextualizes" (Young et al., 2002, p. 206).

A tendency to decontextualize individual's actions exists in the West. In order to consider context, a reflective pause may be in order to notice the many aspects of an action. A example of an action might be "I am applying for a job." Contextual considerations could include the following:

- Is this my first job, or was I recently laid off?
- Am I by myself, or am I being helped by a parent, friend or professional?
- Am I 16 or 55?
- Did I graduate from high school, or do I have my Ph.D.?
- Are there available jobs, or is there a high rate of unemployment?
- Am I unfamiliar with this company, or do I have an inside connection with the hiring manager?
- Did I recently immigrate, or has my family lived in my home country for generations?

Each of these situations has different contextual implications and therefore constellates a different moment. By examining each action in context, we are able to see more closely "career in the process of construction" (Young & Valach, 2004, p. 502).

In order to make sense of actions that occur with others and that are goal directed and occur over time, Young et al. (1996, 2002, 2006, 2011) put forth the following three broader constructs: *joint action, project*, and *career*. All three constructs are central to a number of research projects that have been undertaken (Young et. al., 2006; Young et. al., 2011). The construct *joint action* refers to actions that occur within a dyad, for example, between an adolescent and a parent. Young et al. (1996, 2002) draw on John Shotter's (2002) research in interpersonal relations, which characterizes joint action as producing "*unintended* and unpredictable outcomes" (p. 39). Shotter argues that something occurs in joint action that cannot be explained by the sum of each individual's intentions. This new third situation is neither the individual's nor a product of external forces but is instead a weaving together of all of these factors.

Building upon joint actions is the concept of a *project*, which consists of multiple actions. A project is considered a heuristic system within which career can be studied and described (Young & Valach, 2004). This heuristic system allows participants to explore a multitude of possibilities together, such as a mother and daughter deciding to visit a number of different work environments together, following up with a discussion about their impressions. This project helps the daughter begin to formulate some career possibilities. Similar to project, *career* is a construct that helps build connections between actions in order to feed a forward process. Career differs from a *project* in that it includes a wider range of goals and actions that occur over a longer period of time (Young et al., 2011).

One of the primary areas contextual action theory has been applied is in studying the link between relationship processes and career development within parent/adolescent dyads. In part, adolescent's careers develop through a co-constructive process with their parents; therefore, joint actions within the parent-adolescent relationship provide a rich, generative location for focus that deepens our understanding

of the career construction process. One example of such an action is found in a study conducted by Young and Valach (2004), wherein a mother and daughter created a career project that entailed exploring avenues for the daughter to pursue a career in dance. They focused on three areas: conversing about the prospects of a dance career, learning more about what is involved in creating a dance career, and creating dance opportunities for the daughter. The mother preferred that her daughter focus on ballet, whereas the daughter's preference was to leave her options open. In the following excerpt, they jointly consider the possibilities:

> Mother (M): . . . So that is something that you would like to do is audition for companies and then you would maybe like to audition for something in L.A.?
> Adolescent (A): Yeah, something that is jazz related on the other side.
> M: So you could go either way?
> A: Yeah.
> M: So you don't want to limit it to just ballet? [A: oh, no, so, um] What would you, how would you, what would you try out for in L.A.?
> A: I don't know. Maybe training with somebody. I don't know exactly. I know lots of people who dance in L.A. or run one of those workshops like Urban Jam or something. That would be fun. (p. 503)

Although the mother and daughter in this conversation each have different ideas about how the daughter can pursue her dance interests, through a joint exploration different possibilities are generated. This act of exploration then helps bring the daughter closer to her career goals.

In a similar study involving 19 parent and adolescent dyads, participants were instructed to identify projects that relate to the adolescent's future, utilizing the joint action construct (Young et al., 2006). The researchers focused on the actions that the dyads generated, in contrast to a more typical focus on individual perceptions of relationship variables. The dyads were followed for a 6-month period. Three types of projects were identified:

- projects that were wholly concerned with parent-adolescent relationship
- projects that shifted from career development goals and actions to explicit relationship goals and actions
- projects in which parent-adolescent communication was used as a means to facilitate career and other developmental goals (Young et al., 2006, p. 1).

Although Young's et al. (2006) study was presented to the participants as a career development project, the parents and adolescents focused a significant amount of their attention on relationship projects and acting on communication goals. A number of participants confirmed that they saw positive changes in their relationships by participating in the study. The findings of the study illustrate that "the career support and direction that parents feel they can provide their adolescent children, and which adolescents seek from their parents, are constructed within their communication" (p. 18). Through this process of communication, their relationship is constituted.

In summary, the adolescent/parent dyads in Young's et al. (2006) study were able to identify and act on relationship and communication goals within their broadly defined

career projects. One adolescent commented, "Because we're actually communicating now . . . my independence has grown tons" (p. 17). The parents and adolescents then were able to use their relationship and communications goals to help steer their actions, and as a result, they referred to their relationships as attributing meaning to their joint actions. This study exemplifies the complex interconnections between career development, communication, and joint actions of parents and adolescents.

Narratives: Career as story.

> Narrative is more than persons spinning stories as they sit in their armchairs.
>
> Young & Valach, 2000, p. 187

With the ubiquity of the novel and the everyday story, narratives are always close at hand. Sharing stores is a means of actively creating meaning for ourselves. Narrative-based methods of research and practice in the field of career are therefore a likely fit. In short, "to describe a person's career is to tell a story" (Cochran, 1990, p. 71). In addition, narratives exist within a temporal organization, which correlates with the idea of one's career evolving *over time*. This temporal relationship is a mainstay in the field of career, providing continuity in its most basic sense.

Among the various postmodern contributions to the field of career development, narrative approaches to career theory and practice are significant. Narrative applications to career development have become commonplace and have made their way into the toolkit of many career counselors (McIlveen & Patton, 2007). In addition, narrative research methods are being recognized for their effectiveness in deepening our understanding of current career experiences (Bujold, 2004; Chase, 1995). Among Young and Collin's (2004) four career discourses, *the discourse of subjectivity and narrative* includes the concepts "how the individual constructs self over time," "in context," and "self definition, self and agency, purpose, and subjectivity" (p. 381), all of which place ones' *self* in a central position as the subject of one's own evolving story.

Narrative approaches to career development typically are interpreted within a constructivist framework. Constructivism draws on psychological ways of understanding the individual actor and the way she or he constructs meaning through the creation of a life script. The use of constructivist theory allows for a psychologically based individual actor to remain central, which is an obtainable shift for many career counselors who may have been trained in more traditional career methodologies.

Psychologist Larry Cochran (1997), who has been influential in bringing the theory of narrative construction to the field of career counseling, notes that "career counseling is an established profession of 'role casting,' one of the social systems ways of assuring a more enchanting play. It is toward this end that a new theoretical approach and practice was developed" (p. x). Establishing the careerist as the lead character of his or her own story supports the individual actor in envisioning a range of creative possibilities for the future. This approach empowers an individual, who is then more likely to set his or her own career course discriminately. Cochran suggests that "a story that facilitates acting as an agent is better than a story that facilitates reacting or undergoing as a patient" (p. 142).

The following is a brief sampling of several narrative approaches to career development. This review by no means comprehensively covers the rich diversity of narrative career methods available but rather is intended to provide the reader with a brief sampling of some narrative career counseling developments.

Campbell and Unger (2004b) draw upon client's stories as a method for constructing their preferred work future. They argue that "there is no essential self to be discovered—just a story that is revealed and negotiated with others" (p. 29). Clients are supported in a discovery process using stories to create their preferred future. Because our preferred futures evolve out of common social discourses, it is not uncommon that a client may start out with one preferred future that changes over time. Campbell and Unger present the example of a client who is interested in leaving her job as chief executive officer of a school board with the hopes of becoming a veterinarian. Upon further exploration of her goals, the client was able to recall deeply satisfying experiences of caring for the animals on her family's farm. She then made attempts to see if she might incorporate some of the same elements in her present job, because she saw obvious advantages to staying, primarily financial success and status. "Becoming a veterinarian," when explored further, allowed important childhood stories to emerge, providing rich and valuable information for this client's preferred future. She decided that one important change in her current job would be to have more direct contact with the children in the school district. Although she did not give up entirely her interest in pursuing veterinarian medicine, she also explored additional future possibilities such as taking a year off or teaching overseas.

Cochran (1997) speaks to constructing ones future as follows:

> Construction of a narrative of the future is an attempt to weave together, in a whole composition, the person's most fundamental motives, outstanding strengths, and salient interests and values. The central desires aroused in the past are to be fulfilled in the future. (p. 84)

Counselor educator Pamela Brott (2001) describes her "storied approach" to career counseling as a "shift from gathering information to generating experience through one's life stories" (p. 306). She invites her clients to share stories while applying the following process: "co-construction (i.e., to reveal), de-construction (i.e., to unpack), and construction (i.e., to author)" (p. 306). Various techniques are incorporated in order to illuminate the client's life story and his or her personal meanings. Brott asks questions to generate stories and highlight "sparkling moments" (p. 306). Some possible questions she might ask are "What do you remember about high school?", "What was a high point of your first job experience?", or "How would your grandmother view your decision to go back to school?" (p. 49). In Brott's narrative method, the career counselor is involved throughout this discovery process as a dialogic co-collaborator. Rather than seeing career counseling as a task of gathering information from the client, the clients' stories of "past experiences, current meanings, and future actions" are used to reveal "self-knowledge" (p. 305). In contrast to utilizing career testing to identify self-knowledge, stories provide an avenue for cultivating this knowledge of the self.

As forms of constructivist narrative assessment, Vance Peavy (1996), creator of SocioDynamic counseling, utilizes a variety of experiential methods such as autobiographical writing, conceptual mapping, and word sculpting. These methods serve as ways to initiate alternative ways of seeing oneself. One particularly imaginative method, word sculpting, originally developed by Rico (1991) as a method used for dealing with personal crisis, begins with the clients producing a movement of the hand. With this movement, the client then creates a shape on a blank piece of paper with a pencil or a pen. Next, the client may add words, weaving together thoughts and shapes while initiating new patterns for making sense of a working future. A client who participated in this process with Peavy shared the following remarks: "I am amazed. My hand moves, I feel my life. Something new is stirring. Yesterday I just couldn't think . . . now words are forming. I seem to be inventing myself. That's it: When I write, I open my future" (as cited in Peavy, 1996, p. 14).

Severy (2008) introduced an online career narrative tool as a self-help approach to assisting clients in their career discovery process. Eight online activities were made available: (a) Narrative Themes: Early Childhood Recollections; (b) Narrative Themes: Autobiography; (c) Narrative Themes: Role Models; (d) Values Checklist: What Do I Really Want?; (e) Interests: Choosing a Genre; (f) Significant Others: Casting Your Character; (g) Personal Mythology: What Role Will I Play?; and (h) Action Steps: What Do I Do Now? An initial study of this method found that this intervention did provide a significant impact on participants by increasing their career decision certainty and decreasing their indecision. In addition, this online narrative tool expanded into new areas of career-related exploration for an online career development tool by including "spirituality, purpose, meaning and mission" (p. 270).

Donald Schutt (2007), a human resources development director, developed strength-based career counseling method that uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an organizational change method based on social constructionist principles. AI is relevant for this dissertation in that the research design was drawn from the principles of AI. One of the core elements of AI is the use of positive storytelling as a way to generate resources and strengths within organizations (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Stories are shared amongst employees about what works, which generates new discourses of change (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barret, 2002). Uses for AI are expanding and have been applied to daily living, relationships, family life, and career counseling (Dole, Silbert, Mann, & Whitney, 2008; Kelm, 2005; Schutt, 2007; Stavros & Torres, 2005).

Drawing on AI principles and design, Schutt's (2007) career-building workshop involves participants working together in dyads and sharing positive stories about their careers. During the initial segment of the workshop, participants are asked to describe in detail a time when they felt happy in their careers. In order to explore these instances further, additional questions are asked, such as these:

> What was it that created the sense of happiness or fulfillment?, Who was involved?, What did the other person(s) do?, As you think about that time when you felt most happy, what workplace characteristics stand out for you as important or necessary for your happiness and success?, What did you do that

> contributed to your own sense of happiness or fulfillment and what about the experience made it meaningful? (p. 28)

The interviewer is instructed to take notes and complete a summary sheet, which, at the end of the interview, is shared with the interviewee. The interviewer is asked to identify themes, quotable statements, and strengths of the interviewee. Schutt sees these initial activities as initiating appreciation for "what one has, the best of what is, and the positive core" (p. 29). By identifying these rich resources, individuals can prepare to carry these positive qualities forward as they design their career paths.

Following the initial storytelling segment of the workshop, a number of guiding questions are made available for participants to ask each other (Schutt, 2007). These questions help participants discover specific action steps for their career plans while clarifying the support they will need from the important people in their lives. This process is framed as an ongoing inquiry so that, in the future, participants may want to rework or adjust their action plan or add discovered strengths.

Schutts's (2007) strength-based career counseling method is a rich example of combining storytelling with action steps as one possibility for career construction. In addition, participants are left with the tools needed to continue to redesign their careers as they discover new and important information.

Summary. This brief overview of some narrative and social constructionist career development methods demonstrates that incorporating postmodern views into career development has and is likely to continue to generate numerous creative and diverse methods for career practice and research.

Chapter IV
Research Methodology

Conducting research requires the researcher to communicate a framework or research tradition with which to make sense out of the study. While approaching this study on careering and women, I became aware of two primary schools of thought that are compatible epistemologically and have been influential in my configuring this study. The two schools, narrative/performative and feminist, are often found intertwined in their use, because they both have challenged the detached observant gaze commonly found in traditional Western science. Mentioned briefly here are some of the origins and ensuing expansions for knowledge acquisition in the modern world in order to establish this study within the larger field of societal research pursuits. Some of the more recent theories and theorists that come into play for the primary method used for the analysis of this study are also highlighted.

A Brief Glimpse: The Scientific Revolution and the Age of Reason

Research, as a scientific undertaking, represents a powerful and formative social force, dictating what we consider to be real and legitimate knowledge. With its origins dating as far back as 600 BCE, during what is known as the Classical Era in Greece, science-related discussions provoked intense debate surrounding the origins and workings of the world. Rather than emphasizing experimentation, Greek philosophers were best known for their love of ideas emphasizing beauty and the poetics of abstraction (Tarnas, 1991). Several centuries later, beginning with the 16th century, the love of ideas returned, this time emphasizing experimentation and marking the birth of the scientific revolution.

Over the past several hundred years, scientific discoveries have served to open and close different ways of understanding our world and ourselves. Reflecting back to the beginning of the scientific revolution, Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), a cleric in Poland, brought into question the presumed order of the universe. For nearly 2000 years, it was assumed that the earth was the center of the universe, or according to the Judeo-Christian worldview, the earth was the center of God's universe, as stated in the bible (Repcheck, 2007). Most notably, science at this time served to deliver humanity from the dogmatism of the Church and into a world of rationality that individuals could assess for themselves. In time, the scientific revolution evolved in concert with philosophical developments that ascribed to empiricism, the belief that knowledge is derived from experience or actual scientific experimentation. The philosophical time period during the 18th century known as The Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason is also associated with the idea that individuals in society are understood as being separate entities from their surroundings. (Kleiman & Lewis, 1992). The concept of an objective, observable reality remains as a stronghold in the modern Western world, as well as the idea that society is composed of separate individuals.

Modern science presumes that the world operates and therefore exists outside of ourselves and that it can only be known through rigorous experimentation. Although different methods are available for conducting scientific experiments, the method that

remains best known is the Scientific Method, consisting of the development of a hypothesis, acquisition of quantifiable data, drawing conclusions, and then applying this information, these verifiable truths, to the general population (Achinstein, 2004). The use of the Scientific Method has produced countless theories or communal truths, which are established and followed by the scientific community and society in general. These truths are imbedded in our daily lives, driving decisions such as what sorts of medications we should take or how we can get rid of the weeds on our lawns.

Because scientific knowledge is continually evolving and changing, it is not difficult to look back and find historical "scientific facts" which no longer are considered to be accurate, such as the belief in the 1950s that radiation from nuclear testing was harmless or that smoking cigarettes has no deleterious health effects. These historical scientific "facts," if declared today, would be considered preposterous statements. Science is, in fact, a continually shifting plane of truths. Some deem scientific knowledge without significant questioning to be dangerous. Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (2006) challenges members of society who most obviously benefit from the positive outcomes of science to pay attention also to the impact these developments have on those who are politically vulnerable. Harding argues, "We who produce systematic empirical knowledge and the systematic frameworks it requires, are in denial about this situation" (p. ix). Science as a whole purports to be for the benefit of all, whereas in reality, science is far from a neutral endeavor; in fact, science is wrought with the power imbalances that exist through out all factions of society.

Twentieth-century philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn (1996), author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and Paul Feyerabend (1993), author of *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, have brought into question an unchallenged scientific paradigm. Kuhn (1996) points out that "a paradigm is what members of a scientific community share, *and*, conversely, a scientific community consists of men who share the paradigm" (p. 176). In other words, when a dominant paradigm goes unquestioned, it serves to reinforce itself, or the users of the paradigm also use it to reinforce their desired positions. Feyerabend's (1993) solution to this dilemma is to challenge scientific researchers to pursue theories that are inconsistent with more commonly held views as a way to expose assumed realities. Both Kuhn and Feyerabend, call for us to challenge the universality and authoritative views of the scientific establishment and to maintain a disciplined examination that extends beyond an assumed solitary and dominant scientific paradigm.

One of the most significant limitations created by exclusively adhering to a modernist scientific paradigm is that new forms of knowledge generation have been unrecognized through this strictly scientific lens and viewed as "stories," that is, non-factual entities, and therefore deemed less relevant to research endeavors. It is exactly these "stories," these unverifiable forms of knowledge, that I use in this study as a means to develop new understandings of woman and career in this study. Some of the qualitative methods that are relevant to this study are now briefly reviewed.

The Qualitative Revolution

While the scientific method and quantitative research has dominated research and theory development in most disciplines, emphasizing measurement and controlled experimentation, a "qualitative revolution'" has also been occurring in the social sciences and psychology, taking into account narratives or stories as avenues for knowing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. ix). Interpretive qualitative methods of research and theory development have become commonplace, most notably in the fields of social science and psychology, providing alternative forms for generating knowledge (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Lincoln & Denzin, 2005c). With this explosion of qualitative methods, we can now claim that qualitative research, while differing significantly from traditional science, is recognized as legitimate science and has obtained paradigmatic status (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004).

Because qualitative research methods are not unified theoretically or methodologically, this grouping of methods can best be understood metaphorically "as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (Creswell, 1998, p. 13). Woven fabric, used as a metaphor for qualitative research methods, suggests that these methods themselves are significantly diverse, mirroring the complexity of today's social sphere and therefore fitting for the endeavor of studying and understanding today's society.

Whereas no singular methodological practice is considered *the* qualitative method but rather numerous approaches continue to evolve and change, I provide here a brief sampling of some recent qualitative methods as presented in the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005c), a comprehensive presentation of developments in the field of qualitative research. Included in this publication is a chapter entitled "Performance Ethnography: The Reenacting and Inciting of Culture" (Alexander, 2005), which documents students presenting a study they conducted of migrant street vendors by means of ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Performing in front of the class, the student researchers become street vendors and sell to the audience different commodities. They then each take a turn presenting their vendor's personal narratives (pp. 411-442). In the chapter, "Arts-based Inquiry: Performing Revolutionary Pedagogy," author Susan Finley (2005) uses an arts-based inquiry model for students that are living in shelters or transitional housing. Her goal is to help students understand their circumstance from a politicized view while encouraging them to imagine what is possible through the arts, such as painting their life story (pp. 681-694). Another example of a qualitative method is presented in the chapter "Autoethnography: Making the Personal Political," in which the author, Stacy Holman Jones (2005), utilizes autoethnography by performing personal text on stage as a powerful way to "move writer and readers, subjects and objects, tellers and listeners into this space of dialogue, debate and change" (p. 764). Jones performs her own stories, revealing their construction as occurring through and in others' stories. Her intention is to make this performative dialogue available to the audience through their listening, responses, and contemplation as part of this rich research process (pp. 763-792). As demonstrated by these few examples, qualitative research is being conducted in a multitude of ways, and the blurring of art and science in recent times has become evident.

Qualitative methods have a particular relevance to the study of social relations and the "pluralization of life worlds" (Flick, 2002, p. 2) and therefore are especially useful for expanding our understanding of a significantly more complex society. Rather than constructing overarching understandings of people's lives, a qualitative approach provides a more in-depth view of a smaller number of individuals' lives. What may make sense for one person, family, or region does not necessarily carry over in its entirety to other groups or individuals. By examining more closely this expanding diversity of lived experience, researchers are able to develop more sensitized interpretations, paying attention to the meaning and context of social interchanges (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). Rather than reducing lived human experience to singular, prescriptive understandings applied across the board to people's lives, a qualitative approach to research thus provides a closer look at the complexity and particulars of the variety of lived experience.

Narrative Inquiry: Extending Towards the Performative

In this study, participants shared stories with each other about what they consider high points that relate to their careers or another relevant context such as school or community. I am interacting with these shared stories as performances in order to highlight and understand the relational aspects of career. Qualitative research "above all works with texts" (Flick, 2002, p. 11), and narrative inquiry, a type of qualitative research, utilizes text in the form of stories and is one of the most popular interpretive postmodern approaches to studying meaning making (Bruner,1986; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Narrative research is discussed briefly here as preface to a consideration of the performative turn that has occurred in more recent times.

Story. Stories are present in all aspects of our lives, whether we are sharing with someone where we bought our coveted pair of boots or explaining to our children how a traffic light works. The ordinary nature of stories provides a glimpse into the multitude of ways that people construct their lives (Kenyon & Randall, 1997; McAdams, 1993). Narrative scholars argue that the telling of our stories serves to shape our lives in contrast to stories accurately describing or representing our lives. It is the process of narration that helps us unfold the meaning of our lives and provides a process for constructing our identities. By the telling of one's story, meaning can be construed and sense is made (Bruner, 1990; Chase, 2005; Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

The act of storytelling conjures an image of an individual talking about himself or herself. Although it is the individual that is telling a story, storytelling is by no means a solitary endeavor. The creation of who we are and what matters most does not occur in isolation. Storytelling and sense making are instead best construed as part of an ongoing dynamic social exploration (K. J. Gergen, 2009; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). The telling of one's story includes sharing of this story with *others*, and typically, the story itself involves numerous relational acts; for example, in the process of explaining where I bought the pair of boots that my friend is interested in, I immediately unveil the social threads that are a part of this story. A component of this story includes another friend who, when we were talking recently at her art opening, told me where I could find this

particular style of boot. She recommended a locally owned business that she likes supporting. By examining the relational components of this story, one could go on discovering the various social connections that relate to my ownership of these boots, such as where they were made, who made them, and so forth. The myriad social interactions that occur and provide meaning becomes evident when a relational lens is applied to the sphere of storytelling.

In narrative research, stories are typically introduced into the research process during interviews by inviting research participants to present stories that are relevant to the area of interest. These stories or narratives, by design, are richly embedded with valuable information about the melding of social context, individual experience, and the meaning making process (Flick, 2002; Fontana & Frey, 2003). Whereas in this research project, I focus on stories as social constructions, narrative and storytelling scholar David Boje's (1998) suggestion to analyze stories as "situated performances" (p. 1) rather than treating stories as objects is fitting. By emphasizing the performative nature of stories, a three dimensional performance occurs: The participants, myself as the researcher, and you the reader, or the audience, are transformed into a dynamic, socially expressed presentation. Because work itself is best understood as a social performance, and the development of one's career identity is both performed and unfolded in a socially dynamic landscape, a performative approach to this research project struck me as most fitting. The stories I am addressing in this study, rather than being approached as fixed entities for study, therefore are treated as dynamic paths for understanding and becoming, for the participants, for myself as the researcher, and for the reader.

Performance. Performative research has evolved in tandem with migrations of people mixing and diversifying narratives while expanding our understanding of "local context . . . [to] encompass the historical, dynamic, and often traumatic, movements of people, ideas, images, commodities, and capital" (Conquergood, 2002, p. 145). In order to achieve greater understanding of these increasingly complex and rich narratives, the performative turn in narrative research has exposed the division between theory and practice, challenging researchers to move more deeply into relationship with what it is we are studying.

Performative research has been interpreted and applied in a multitude of ways by researchers. Some researchers create actual performances as a way of presenting their data in health care and educational settings (Cancienne, 2008; Mienczakowski & Moore, 2008). Performance is also used as a way to accentuate the expression of one's identity as a social construction and has been applied to the field of psychology, as previously discussed in chapter 1 (M. M. Gergen, 2001; Holzman & Mendez, 2003). Performance is also a method used for understanding the ways that identities are performed in everyday life, while being situated in a historical, cultural, and political socially constructed field K. J. Gergen, 1991, 1999, 2009). Saliha Bava (2001), a creative contributor to the transformative field of play, or improvisation, states, "Performance allows the unorthodox to occur" (n.p.). In Bava's completely online dissertation, she draws upon the arts, poetry and animation, and a range of styles of narration to present her research, which is a personal reflection of her family therapy internship at the Houston Galveston Institute (2001). Sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman, in her book, *Narrative Methods*

for the Human Sciences, proposes the use of Dialogic/Performance Analysis as a category of narrative research. Dialogic/Performance Analysis includes approaches to narrative research that emphasize the "spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture" (p. 105). Psychologist Lyn Mikel Brown's (1998) research with white preadolescent girls in rural Maine is one such example that Riessman presents as a performance-based study. Brown utilizes a voice-centered method for her analysis, based on the Listening Guide she developed with her colleagues (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003). Brown (1998) explicitly identifies her position in the first of several listenings as part of the interpretive process, thereby establishing herself as a character in this performance rather than a passive, separate observer. Brown's second listening focuses on the girls' first-person voices or narratives and the ways that they speak about themselves and whom they consider "other" and why. Brown's additional listenings attend to the themes of her research, the perception of working-class girls, the girls' anger, and the ways that the girls "accommodate to or resist dominant constructions of femininity" (p. 34). The use of the term *performance* in this case highlights the girls' daily performative expressions of anger and strong opinions as these relate to their class identities. Rather than tending to the structural components of the performative narrative, Brown invites the reader to step into the performance in order to have a more direct and relational experience of what it is like to be these working-class girls in her study.

Feminist Considerations in This Research Narrative

Feminist scholarship has played a significant role in the expansion of research methods and evolved from resistance to the harsh reality of women's invisibility in many facets of society and the academy's indifference towards women as researchers. As part of the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s, feminists were instrumental in exposing women's invisibility and lack of representation in social science and psychological research (Blau, DuPlessis, & Snitow, 1998). Feminists argued that what was presumed to be a value-neutral, positivistic social science was instead something quite different. Scientists were in fact interpreting and applying their values as they developed and communicated their theories (M. Gergen, 1988; Haraway, 1988). The knowledge that was being generated through most research endeavors mirrored the discrimination toward women in society.

Researchers, predominantly white men, historically utilized the white male experience as normative and preferred. Women were not included in scholarship activity nor were they considered important to include in many research samplings. Feminists argued that this type of male-centric research was biased and far from following the tenants of positivism (Gilligan, 1993; Harding, 1987). Feminist researchers claimed that positivism was operating from a "privileged location within a historical, material, and social set of patriarchal power relations" (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 7). In response to this knowledge, feminists pursued woman's representation in research in order to *set the record straight*. Over time, numerous responses developed: Some feminists continue to work critically within the framework of traditional science by challenging women's lack of representation, exposing prejudices that are found in research, and defining

science as situated knowledge rather than objective truths, while continuing to evolve an empirically based feminist approach to research (Nelson & Nelson, 1996; Kass-Simon, Farnes, & Nash, 1990; Leckenby, 2007), whereas other feminists have established their research entirely within a postmodern lens, drawing on narrative, performative, critical analysis and other methods (Butler, 1990; M. M. Gergen, 2001; Haraway, 1988; Walkerdine, 2001).

Standpoint theorists and the Listening Guide. Once research practices were established that no longer ignored women's situated experience and instead argued for women's representation and participation, women's unacknowledged experience came to the foreground. This occurred in conjunction with what is often referred to as the second wave of feminism (Reger, 2005), when women, and supporters of women came together politically to address glaring inequalities in society in areas such as education, the workplace, and at home. Notably, in the United States, amendments to civil rights and higher-education legislation addressing sex equity in the workplace and in educational institutions occurred in 1972 with Title VII (Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972) and Title IX (Education Amendments of 1972), spurring an already growing women's movement.

In conjunction with the second wave of feminism a standpoint epistemology emerged configuring women's social location as the point of departure for understanding women's experience (Harstock, 2004). Women's social location is set within a sociohistorical dynamic of oppression fueled by a patriarchal society that privileges power to white men. It is this sociohistorical location of women's subordination that standpoint researchers strive to understand through individual women's experience. With a construed backdrop of oppression, research becomes activism, challenging the status quo by opening up the field of knowledge to include women's experience.

Standpoint feminist researchers are known for choosing a rigorous path of transparency and revealing their own social location by sharing their opinions and viewpoints as well as communicating relevant contextual information such as social class, race, and other determinants that influence the research process (Denzin, 2003; Gilligan, 1993; Jordan et al., 1991; McIntosh, 1988; Miller, 1986). Revealing one's social location not only contributes a rich dimension to the research narrative by personalizing the researcher but also confirms the impossibility of a value-neutral research endeavor.

Gilligan (1988, et. al, 1993) and colleagues (D. Brown, 1998; L. M. Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Rogers & Tolman, 1991; Way, 1998) are significant contributors to standpoint feminist research and have been instrumental in establishing a women's and girls' voice-centered method for psychological research. Voice, as a metaphor, has proven to be a powerful entrance into developing new ways of understanding women's psychology. In the early 1980s, Gilligan became known for her criticisms of Lawrence Kohlberg's (1969) stage theory of moral development. Gilligan had been a research assistant for Kohlberg in the1970s, and she went on to challenge his theories that were based on research that used only privileged white males as participants. Gilligan expressed concern that a "male" oriented view of individual rights and rules was considered a higher level of moral development than moral decisions that were embedded in one's relationships, which is an area that woman are encouraged to be culturally versed

in. (Gilligan, 1993). As Gilligan became aware of these discrepancies, she and other researchers were also being told not to include women subjects in their studies because that would skew their findings. Out of this experience, Gilligan began writing her book, *In a Different Voice* (1993), first published in 1982. Rather than titling her book, *A Woman's Voice*, Gilligan chose a title that spoke to what she was hearing, which was a relational voice. Although Gilligan has primarily engaged girl and women subjects for her research, she is clear that by listening to women, the voice that has become evident is a relational voice, and this voice is relevant for understanding all humans (Gilligan, 2009).

In the late 1980s, Gilligan and her colleagues Lynn Mikel Brown, Elizabeth Debold, Judy Dorney, Barb Miller, Annie Rogers, Steve Sherblom, and Mark Tappan reached a critical turning point in the research they were conducting at that time with adolescent girls. Brown and Gilligan (1992) talk about this dilemma:

> If we repeated the questions we had asked the previous years, we would gain a standard comparison, but at the risk of ignoring what we were seeing and feeling and turning away from our emerging questions, perhaps even at the risk of losing the girls. (p. 18)

Gilligan and her colleagues made the decision to change the course of their study in order to attend to their "emerging questions" and stay in relationship with the girl participants. The Listening Guide, a method that Gilligan and her colleagues continue to use, stems from this choice point and is a method that has proven to be flexible and responsive to relationally based research interests. Gilligan and her colleagues continue to generate and expand our understanding of a relational voice through their ongoing research, in particular around certain types of marginalized expression for women and girls such as anger, sexuality, and personal needs in the context of relationship.

As a psychotherapist, I began my practice when the standpoint position emerged as an available narrative challenging "male" centric psychological theories. Gilligan's (1993) book, *In a Different Voice* became a resource that I suggested for some clients as a way to open up the possibility of a relationally based narrative. I also found it meaningful no longer to configure my stance as a psychotherapist as objective, and instead, I incorporated transparency and relational engagement with my clients as a way of helping them. I found this to be true for both my male and female clients, and over time, I identified ways that both men and women experienced constraints as a result of common gendered narratives.

My choice of the Listening Guide as a guidepost for my analysis partially stems from the usefulness I discovered in applying Gilligan and her colleagues' work to my practice as a psychotherapist. I also want to clarify that although I value Gilligan's work as a way to bring voice and the relational to the foreground, Gilligan presents an embodied, individual actor as the focus of her research, and in this, I differ. Rather than maintaining the separate albeit relational being, in this study, I aimed for listening by being in relationship with the participants. Through this relational process, it was my intention to elucidate the concept of careering I am proposing.

Postmodern feminist expansions. Feminist explorations of new methods for generating knowledge in the context of social and personal relationship as a challenge to the positivist assumption of objectivity and separation suggest an affinity with postmodern perspectives (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990). The third wave of feminism emphasizes the undoing of dualistic thinking and is often equated with the postmodern era (Mack-Canty, 2005). Feminists' attempt to understand the complexity of social relations and the human psyche is relevant in postmodern times, when the plurality of social systems, social relationships, and even the identity of the individual require methods which are responsive to relational complexity. Most feminists would agree that there is not one essential woman's experience but instead a multiplicity of women's lived experiences, and many feminists are in agreement with the postmodern view that universal truths and overarching narratives have given way to a world that requires flexibility and responsiveness in order to discern a relational, socially constructed knowledge (Butler, 1990, 1992; M. M. Gergen, 2001; hooks, 1990). A number of theorists have been influential at the crossroads of postmodern and feminist thinking, of which a few are mentioned here.

French postmodernists have challenged us to deconstruct many given facets of modern society. Jacques Derrida (1967/1997), philosopher and linguist, who is at the forefront of developing poststructural thought, coined the term *deconstruction*. When applied as a research tool, deconstruction entails a reading of literary and philosophical texts, with a focus on what runs counter to more obvious systematic structures. By deconstructing these texts, implicit hierarchies, which serve to repress some meanings while enhancing others, are revealed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Foucault (1980), another prominent French philosopher, introduced radically new ways to conceptualize power by theorizing about the complex connections between power and knowledge, while also contributing to feminist theory (Hekman,1996; Sawicki, 1991). Foucault argued that knowledge was context bound and produced within a complex field of variable power relations. Western medical discourse, for example, has well-established power lines: The doctor holds the knowledge-power and the patients are in the position of not knowing and therefore not powerful. All of this is produced in a culture that sanctions a Western medical model. Other models of healing might recognize the patient's power-knowledge as a critical resource in the cure (Mehl-Madrona, 2005). Researchers in Foucault's tradition examine cultural texts looking for dominant discourses as a means to uncover "silences" and reveal the workings of different power relations. By understanding the discursive practices that lead to certain power-knowledge developments, alternative discourses can then be explored.

French feminists philosophers, Luce Irigaray (1994/2001), Julia Kristeva (1981, 1983/1987), and Hélène Cixous (Cixous & Clement, 1975/1986) are recognized as key contributors to the postmodern critical research movement. By radically undoing and then reconstructing the subject as multiple cultural discourses, Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva have each contributed influential and varied theories to feminist postmodernism. Irigaray, feminist philosopher, linguist and cultural theorist, in her writing calls for "two approaches . . . [for] the establishment of different norms of life: the analysis of formal structures of discourse and the creation of a new style" (as cited in Whiteford,1991, p. 14). Irigaray invites the reader to decipher the meaning of her text by asking, "Who am

I?" and then responding with, "Who are you? Can we meet? Talk? Love? Create something together?" (as cited in Whiteford,1991, p. 14). Kristeva (1983/1987) reconstructs subjects into subjects-in-process, emphasizing the production of subjects as being continually in process, in a political and historical landscape. This powerful deconstruction of the subject draws in the reader as interlocutor in the deconstructive process.

Social constructionism, in contrast to deconstructionist notions of undoing, emphasizes generative forms of research that create, discover, and perform new constructions and therefore new forms for helping us move forward in more meaningful ways (K. J. Gergen, 2003). With the aim of research to reconstruct meaning making activities that no longer are useful, fall short of what is being called for, or are even discriminatory or oppressive, social constructionism opens doorways for new pathways of inquiry and praxis. Whereas one of the primary tenets of social constructionism is that researchers need not ascribe to one singular truth and instead have numerous relevant avenues for seeing the world, drawing on methods from different theoretical underpinnings is not problematic. Significant debate exists between different schools of feminism regarding issues such as concerns that postmodernism is undermining to feminist political goals and that postmodernism may be more appropriate for men, as they have had their enlightenment and might benefit from being challenged to deconstruct some of their truth claims (Di Stefano, 1990) and that women, having made significant progress politically as an identified group, might suffer and lose ground in the face of this deconstruction (Nicholson, 1990). A melding of paradigms has occurred, however, whereby researchers are probing "where and how paradigms exhibit confluence and where and how they exhibit differences, controversies and contradictions" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 192). One example of such researchers is feminist activist Nancy Naples (2003), who argues for a multidimensional approach to a standpoint epistemology. Rather than conceptualizing postmodern and standpoint feminist perspectives as in opposition to each other, she utilizes feminist standpoint methods as guidance for her analysis of women's political praxis while maintaining an alliance with postmodern sensibilities. Naples (2003) maintains that standpoint methods are useful guides and argues that one may conceptualize standpoints as being constructed between researchers and those being researched in dynamic social, political, and historical settings.

Mary Gergen (2001) a feminist, postmodern psychologist argues, "The feminist standpoint position and the postmodern one need not be at odds," but points out that the distinction between these two orientations is that the "social constructionist will not claim that her views are universal, essential or transhistorical" (p. 41). My use of the Listening Guide also provides an example of reaching across theoretical boundaries. Because I am operating within a social constructionist epistemology, as Gergen suggests, there is not inherently a problem with using a method that originated within the feminist standpoint tradition as long as I refrain from mirroring or falling back on its essentializing tendencies.

Chapter V
Careering: A Performative Study With Women and Girls

Components of the Study: Setting the Stage

Women and girls. The research participants in the careering performances are women and girls, ages ranging from 12 to 55. I have discussed thus far my choice to do this study with women and girls as an extension of an interest that developed in my work as a psychotherapist through observations of my female clients and their career related processes. As a psychotherapist I have become keenly aware that the concept of career and it's use as a way of developing and making sense of our working lives falls short as a guidepost for women and girls. Through both my own personal experiences as well as through my client observations there exists a variable landscape within which women navigate their career's involving complex relational tensions usually involving raising children, but also care giving roles related to their families and their communities. In addition to this, which I discussed in the introduction, women continue to face significant barriers and obstacles in the work force that add particular challenges as they go forward with the creation of their working lives. These relational tensions coupled with the systemic challenges of an unequal playing field suggests that studying generative options for construing and engaging careers is an important topic for women and one in need of further exploration.

By choosing women and girls for this study I am not predetermining that the concept of careering is only relevant to women. I in fact believe that highlighting the relational core of career and its social constructions is also relevant for men. I also want to point out that by focusing on women and girls it might appear that I am promoting women, as a fixed category which presumes more similarities than differences. Again, I want to be clear that I believe that amongst women there are quite possibly as many or more differences then there are similarities. Audre Lorde, a black feminist poet who argued against feminists who by pressing for woman's similarities as a coherent group created a middle class white woman's movement, while marginalizing women of color or women from a different socioeconomic status. I agree with Lorde when she said that presenting women, as a monolithic grouping is based on "pathetic pretense" (1983, p. 99).

Gender also serves as a powerful organizing discourse in society, and when "we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power and inequality, not simply difference" (Kimmel, 2000, p. 1). According to Judith Butler, a philosopher well known for her examination of gender and post modernism, gender and the category of women are *performed* rather than essential or in other words, gender is something that we do, act, make or become socially, rather than possess. Butler (1990) argues that a feminist critique needs to include an understanding that the category of women "is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (p. 2). Whereas Butler, in her book *Gender Trouble,* emphasized the performative fluidity of identity development, she has since focused on how a "normative process of restraint and prohibition take effect and politically discriminate between identities" (Kirby, 2006, p. 86). My interest in creating a gendered study was to introduce a supportive and

positive environment for women and girls to construct possibilities for their careers. I was also aware that within such an environment exist constraints and cultural practices that play a role in sculpting what emerged for the woman and girls and therefore also set out to create a situation where some of these binding forces might be waylaid through the use of positive storytelling in the participants' performances.

Between generations. As a psychotherapist, in my work with adolescents, I have been keenly aware that they serve as my informants of popular culture and that they offer invaluable information for negotiating meaning in a fast-paced changing world. Through these conversations with young people I learn about new music, Facebook or Twitter on the Web, or what is scary or hopeful about their own and therefore our shared prospects for the future. According to Margaret Mead (1970), when adults make the statement, "I have been young and you have never been old," implying the adult knows better, young people may now reply with, "You have never been young in the world I am young in, and you never can be" (p. 49). Currently, in the developed world, meaningful social exchanges between generations are rare. Young people are believed to value primarily engagement with their peers and deplore intrusions from adults. Adolescent developmental theorists underscore independence and separation (e.g., Erikson, 1968), emphasizing and affirming the generation gap.

Several years ago, I was a program facilitator for a statewide youth project. The goal of this project was to involve youth in meaningful roles in communities across the state of Colorado. The planning meetings involved community members of at least two generations. The conversations in these meetings had a different yet notable tenor. There often were awkward moments in the beginning of these meetings as participants adjusted to knowing each other in their different roles. Further into the meetings as the generations learned how to create and work together participants shared being moved and inspired by each other. Many of the youth joined public boards and became a part of designing their own communities. This youth involvement model recognized a mutual, creative element between the generations and offered significant direction for these communities for dreaming and developing their futures that was relevant to community members of all ages.

Mead (1970) presents a model of generational interaction in *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap.* She provides a description of changes that have occurred over the past 100 years and argues for a more contemporary approach. The model with which many of us are most familiar is what Mead refers to as the *post-figurative* culture, wherein the elder stands for the past and future, and from this position, guides the younger generation towards their future. These elders conceive of a future for their children based on their own past, with relatively little anticipated change. Mead then describes the *co-figurative* culture, wherein adults and children primarily learn from their peers. This social structure results in age stratification, which is initially established through the school system and then perpetuated throughout adulthood. This disjunction between generations is often referred to as the generation gap. A *pre-figurative* culture, believed by Mead in 1970 to be emerging, is where the adults also learn from their children how to be in society. She suggests that it is "the child and not the parent and grandparent that represent what is to come" (p. 68). Mead goes on to plead that "we must

discover pre-figurative ways of teaching and learning that will keep the future open" (p. 72). She further suggests that

> the development of a pre-figurative culture will depend on the existence of a continuing dialogue in which the young, free to act on their own initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown. Then the older generation will have access to the new experiential knowledge, without which no meaningful plans can be made. It is only with the direct participation of the young, who have that knowledge, that we can build a viable future. (p. 73)

Mead's (1970) insistence on the importance of sharing experiential knowledge between generations mirrors many of my professional experiences. It is more typical to assume that the younger generation is poised to learn from the older generation. Developmental psychologist Erik Erickson (1963) uses the term generativity to describe the need of the older generation to benefit the younger generation by passing down their wisdom and ideas. Dan McAdams, a developmental psychologist who employs narrative therapy, defines generativity as a key element of life story and the narration of one's identity in later life. McAdams and colleagues argue that providing for the next generation in later adulthood is central to making meaning (McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). To provide for the younger generation serves as a well-established act for making meaning. Mutual forms of meaning making such as those that Mead (1970) and I suggest are less familiar and therefore less discussed.

"Imagine Chicago" (Browne & Jain, 2002; Cooperrider, 1996), a citywide change project based on Appreciative Inquiry change methods, set out to create intergenerational learning communities by conducting hundreds of intergenerational interviews. The creation of intergenerational pairings proved to be inspirational and productive for both younger and older participants involved in this project. Appreciative Inquiry utilizes the term *generativity* to describe a process that occurs between people, such as when a group of people discover new ideas which in turn provoke new actions (Bushe, 2007). By establishing that generativity is a process that occurs between people that invites new actions, generativity becomes a mutual process that benefits all actors.

In the spirit of Mead, and with some of the tools and theories provided by Appreciative Inquiry these careering performances are situated between generations. Although the older generation is versed in the realities of the working world, the younger generation is well-versed in the world as they know it. In what ways are the two generations helpful to each other in their discovery process of careering? How does a cross generational component to this study contribute to our understanding of careering for girls and women? How might the "young" and the "old" be helpful to each other in discovering how to approach their current and future work and careers?

Appreciative Inquiry and the positive question. The *positive question*, drawn from Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Whitney, Cooperider, Trosten-Bloom, & Kaplin, 2002) is a central component of this careering study. Through my own participation in an AI training, I discovered the value of positive storytelling as an avenue for performing an expanded identity. Positive stories, which easily can be forgotten in one's personal life or

in organizational memory, are immensely useful for initiating change (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney & Yaeger, 2000) and for the expanded construction of individual's identities, by creating an increased sense of possibility (Kelm, 2005). The telling of positive stories *generates* a reservoir of strengths for the organization or the individual, while encouraging an imaginative approach towards change.

The following is a brief story about my experience of positive storytelling at an Appreciative Inquiry training:

> While at the training, I found myself to be moved and inspired by the storytelling in the room. Participants came alive as we shared stories with each other about high points in our lives. My story was about a time in college when I organized a solar walkathon to raise funds to build and install solar collectors for the ministry building on campus. We were successful and were able to complete the project. I remember well the excitement that I, as a young woman, felt about being in the newspaper and having been the primary organizer. Recounting and sharing this story provided inspiration for me as I reflected on my current life's next steps. I was struck by how one story in my life that I rarely tell held so much valuable information. Clearly, this information emerged through the conversation that involved having a listener who was curious and who also shared a story about a work success that had occurred fairly recently for her.

I had found that storytelling combined with a positive focus provided easy accessibility and immediacy in a situation where most participants did not know each other previously. In addition, the generative aspect of this method was clearly evident. Having discovered through my own experiences the richness that can evolve out of positive storytelling, I chose to incorporate this type of storytelling in my research design.

Appreciative Inquiry's emphasis on creating positive change as a part of the research process is considered a type of Action Research (K. J. Gergen, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2002). In line with the tradition of Action Research, asking positive questions and eliciting stories about what works in an organization, or in this case with women and girls, about their working lives and/or successes, becomes a powerful change process in and of itself. Another way to say this is that AI recognizes that inquiry and change occur simultaneously. The use of a basic AI design in my study was chosen with the intention to provide a useful experience for the participants while simultaneously exploring the concept of careering with the research participants.

This researcher's stance. I have established that my role as a researcher in this careering performance is one where I consider myself part of this study rather than holding myself separate as a dispassionate observer. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (2005), in their overview of different qualitative research paradigms, describe the inquirer posture of a constructivist researcher to be a "'passionate participant' as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction" (p. 196). This description fits well with my intention when I created and became a part of the careering performances. I approached this research project with passion and interest. I interacted with the research participants with warmth

and curiosity. A *relational* stance is another way of describing my research stance, whereby I consistently maintained an awareness of the relational dance amongst the participants and myself. In addition, I was keenly aware of the many relationships the participants referenced during their careering performances. I was also keenly aware that this project was not occurring "inside my head," because even my own thoughts arose as a result of my historical contact with clients, various social constructions of career, and the interactions that occurred with research participants.

The Design of the Study

Overview. This study consisted of four careering performances with separate groups of participants. The groups varied in size, and each was comprised of equal numbers of women, ages 36-58, and girls, ages 12-17. Using a "snowball" technique, I found the participants for the study through my own acquaintance and friendship networks or through acquaintances of people who were in the study (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). My daughter and two of her classmates participated in the first careering group, and I participated in the third careering group. Prior to participating in the careering groups, I contacted each participant directly on the phone and explained to her the nature of the research project. I gave each participant a basic outline of what would be occurring during the careering group. I gained a verbal consent from each focus group member for her participation in the study, for recording the sessions, and for publishing the results in my dissertation. Every individual that agreed to participate in the study followed through with showing up on time for the careering group and participated from the beginning to the close of the group.

The design varied slightly from the first careering group to the following three. The first group was conducted like a small workshop with 10 participants and lasted for 4.5 hours. We spent more time in the beginning doing group warm-up exercises prior to the careering performances. We also had a break during which participants gathered and ate pizza, while engaging in unstructured conversation. Another added component to the first group following the careering performances was time set aside for each participant to create a collage (see Appendix A). Materials such as cut out words and pictures from magazines were set out for participants to create a collage with images and words that reflected what they learned or discovered in their careering performances. The large group reflection session began with participants viewing each other's collages. The ending of this group was similar to the other three groups, in that participants were invited to share thoughts and reflections of their careering performances.

The second and fourth groups had four participants each and lasted for approximately 2.5 hours. The third group had two participants and lasted for 1.75 hours. The consistent elements in all four groups were the following: an introduction wherein I presented the research project and provided time for questions; careering performances with one girl and one woman participant, wherein they each took a turn sharing a "positive" story lasting approximately 45 minutes to an hour total; and a follow-up discussion, wherein participants were asked to share their experiences of the careering performances. All of the group introductions, closure discussions, and careering performances were audio recorded.

Introduction. Each group began with a similar introduction as a means to orient participants to the study, give them an overview of how the time would be used, and describe what their role would be in the study. It was my hope to help participants reconceptualize research and emphasize their dual roles as participants and researchers. My intention in setting the tone for all four groups was strongly to invite all the girls and women to "jump in" and share their ideas, questions, and observations.

Description of the careering performances. When participants began their careering performances they were each given a written copy of the following instruction and questions to have available during the interviews.

1. Share a story about a high point in your life when you were involved in or created something through school/work/community or home that you felt good about. Tell me the whole story so that I can imagine being there, as if it is happening now. Ask questions to fill out the story. Explore the content and wonder together.

2. What was it about you that made this possible? Name five of these qualities. What else and who else made this possible?

3. How do you imagine these qualities and this experience could be useful as a resource and direction for you as you engage the working world?

4. Imagine a next small step that you will take to bring out these qualities more often in your life now.

Each careering performance took place in a separate space so that the recordings would be clear and they would also be able to focus just on their own performance. I remained available throughout the performances to answer any questions participants might have. This involved walking by the performances and occasionally being called over when there was a need for clarification; also, at times, participants spontaneously shared with me what was occurring in their performances. Because I participated in the third group, I was not able to be available during those performances.

All participants followed the same general direction to share a story about a high point in their life when they were involved in or created something through school/work/community that they felt good about. Participants then followed up their storytelling by asking the series of reflective questions to explore their stories further.

Following the careering performances the participants joined together with the other participants and reflected on their experiences with the entire group. My role in the during these ending sessions was one of facilitator while I also shared my own comments or thoughts, as it seemed fitting.

Although as a researcher, I found the first careering group to offer significant material for reflection, I also decided that I was interested in going further with the

careering performances. I chose to create three smaller careering groups with a simpler design focusing primarily on the shared storytelling. These groups took less time to organize and produce, and they provided additional opportunities to explore the concept of careering.

The use of the Listening Guide: A performative analysis. The primary method used in this study to conduct the analysis previously reviewed in chapter IV is the Listening Guide, developed by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues in the 1980s as an alternative to commonly used coding schemes. Gilligan argues that methods of coding remove the researcher too far from the reflexive and subjective nature of human experience (Gilligan et al., 2003). Whereas my primary interest in this study is to bring to light the ample social threads that comprise all aspects of career, a relationally attuned method was called for.

Utilizing the Listening Guide inspires the researcher to pay close attention to the unfolding of research participants' stories and the multiplicity of voice intertwined in these narratives. This is achieved by the researcher establishing a relational stance while interviewing research participants or, in this case, while participating in the careering performances and reviewing the careering transcripts. The Listening Guide, as a method, can be applied to different epistemological frameworks and is intended as a guide rather than a prescriptive method. Lyn Mikel Brown, author of *Raising their Voices: The Politics of Girls Anger*, poetically describes her use of the Listening Guide as hearing "an indecipherable cacophony, a patterned rhythm, an improvised beat" (p. 35) as she listens to and attempts to understand the working and middle-class girls she came to know in her study in rural Maine. I have also drawn on the poetic range allowed in this method through the development of the careering performances, which is explained in more detail in the next section.

Typically, using the Listening Guide involves attending to the data in the form of a narrative transcript by conducting four separate listenings. Each listening has a particular focus in order to draw out certain voices or aspects of the narratives.

The four listenings. The first step I took as my entrance into the data was to transcribe the entire set of audio recordings. It has been suggested that in general, when transcribing, one might first consider the nature of the study and match the approach that is the best fit (Flick, 2002).

No established standard for data transcription has been set, but instead, varying styles are available for the researcher. Some data transcription is more exacting, such as in linguistic or conversation analytic studies. In the case of the Listening Guide, the transcription is created to accompany the audio and/or video recordings of the participant conversations; therefore, less attention is paid to the details of the transcript (L. M. Brown, 1998). Although I did not use an exacting approach for this study, I did set out to capture the words spoken as accurately as I could. I believe that I was fairly successful in this effort, because the taped audio sessions were of high quality and easy to understand. I included hesitations in the transcription, because I felt that those moments were relevant to the overall feel of the performances. Although I set out to transcribe accurately, the transcriptions are a result of my own interactions with the recordings and are

constructions in themselves, not mechanically derived representations of the conversations. Kvale (1996) describes transcripts as "de-contextualized conversations," similar to the way that topographical maps are abstractions of a landscape (p. 165). Just as a map is a tool for exploring a landscape, these transcriptions are also a tool for exploring the "landscape" of careering for woman and girls.

While conducting my first listening, I listened to the audio recordings while following the text in the transcripts. I paid attention to the overall flow, noticing the plots, the characters, and the general landscape, all though a relational lens. I then created my initial narrative summaries (Miller, 1986; Way, 1998), which I call *careering performances*. Creating careering performances involved revisiting the audio recordings and listening to the participants' voices and their interactions. I then created the careering performances by using participant quotes, maintaining the order in which they occurred, with minimal added narration. I chose to present the careering performances in the present tense as a way to accentuate their performative quality. When participants were speaking about their pasts, the narrative remained in the past tense. It was my intention to maintain the integrity of the interactive threads as they occurred between participants while also making decisions about what to include and what to leave out. I made choices to leave out material that I deemed repetitive or less relevant, with the intention of making available for the reader careering performances that were sensible.

Next, I conducted the second listening by first creating "I poems" (L. M. Brown & Gilligan, 1992, pp. 27-28) by highlighting the participant's "I" statements. The purpose of creating the I poems, according to Brown and Gilligan, is to provide an avenue for listening closely to the research participants or, in other words, to come more into relationship with the participants as opposed to creating an objectifying distance. I recognized that by coming more "into relationship" with the participants, I was becoming more attuned to the social constructions that evolve the "I." The I poems are created by first selecting the first-person "I" passages and the accompanying verb as well as any additional words that seem relevant. I highlighted the "I" passages through out each performance using the original manuscript. I then read out loud the I poems, listening for emerging themes that related to the concept of careering. This listening brought to the foreground some of the ebbs and flows of the participants' musings as they shared their stories and explored possible career-related futures. I discovered three themes that seemed to weave in and out of each other, reminding me of three different melodies varying in pitch and rhythm. These themes are *success*, *uncertainty*, and *imagination*. During the second listening, I also became interested in the possibility of creating "we" poems as a means of highlighting the relational voice. Although these poems did highlight some relational engagements, it turned out that underscoring the "we" did not notably extricate the many relational engagements and interactive moments that occurred during the careering performances. Based on this finding, I decided to create a separate relational listening.

During the third listening I focused on the three content themes that emerged during the second listening: success, uncertainty and imagination. I reviewed the original transcript highlighting relevant passages using a different color for each theme.

During the fourth listening, or the relational listening, I discovered two re-occurring relational processes. The first involved relational engagements that were an

integral part of the participants' careering narratives. The second related to moments during the careering performances when the participants began to, in a sense, play off of each other and co-construct. I am describing these as improvisational moments. Working with the original transcript I highlighted the relational themes, each in a different color. With this method, I was able to note the areas where the content and relational themes interacted.

The four listenings I conducted are summarized as follows:

1st. Attending to the overall flow of the appreciative storytelling performances, I noticed the plots, the characters, and the general landscape. I asked myself, "What is the overall tenor of these sessions?" As part of this listening, I created my initial draft of the careering performances.

2nd. I listened to the first-person voices of the participants as they told stories about themselves and their careering processes. I asked myself, "What general themes am I noticing?" I then created I poems. By reading the I poems out loud, the three content themes and two relational themes were identified.

3rd. I conducted a listening by reading the transcripts and highlighting the following three content themes that emerged during the 2nd listening:
   a. Success – Participants' statements that either speak directly about their success or infer success through positive comments. Also included are any references about how participants define success for themselves currently or into the future.
   b. Uncertainty – Participants' expressions of doubt or not knowing.
   c. Imagination – Participants' ideas about their future career or historical reflections that appear significant to their careering narrative.

4th. I conducted a relational listening following these two relational processes:
   a. Relational engagements – Participants' references to significant relationships and social interactions that are notably part of their careering.
   b. Improvisational moments – Interactions between participants whereby they spontaneously co-constructed new ways of understanding their careers.

After completing the four listenings, I returned to the written careering performances and fine-tuned the script in order to draw out the content and relational themes. I also set out to highlight the dynamic interactions between the content and relational themes. In addition, I applied the cadence and style evident in the I poems, creating a poetic and pared-down presentation, with the hope of making the performances readable while not losing their effect.

Chapter VI
The Careering Performances

This section presents a total of 10 careering performances that provide a summary of the participants' performances as part of this careering study. The performances are organized in four acts, based on the four careering groups that I facilitated. Each act contains a certain number of scenes based on the number of participants in that act. Each scene is comprised of two participants: a girl and a woman. Within each act, the reader will also find an introduction and group reflection that shows the beginning and the ending of each careering group where all members were present.

The language I have chosen to use to organize the careering groups is commonly associated with the performance arts because of the performative lens that I bring to these careering groups. This performative lens, as discussed in previous sections, is founded on a social constructionist praxis. Since I have constructed these careering performances I am not suggesting that they are representations of the actual careering groups, but rather that they serve to provide a framework with which to examine some of the social constructions of career and provide evidence for the concept of careering.

Contained within these performances the reader will find examples of the three content themes—success, uncertainty and imagination—and the two relational processes: relational engagements and improvisational moments. Interspersed with the women and girls' voices is a narrative that both summarizes the participants' performances and explicates my findings.

The career performances are organized as follows:

Act I
- Introduction
- Large Group Introductions
- Scene I
- Scene II
- Scene III
- Scene IV
- Scene V
- Lunch Break, Collages, and Group Reflections

Act II
- Introduction
- Scene I
- Group Reflection

Act III
- Introduction
- Scene I
- Scene II
- Group Summary

Act IV
- Introduction
- Scene I
- Scene II

Group Summary

Act I.

Introduction. The first careering performance occurred on a Saturday morning. We met in a large training room typically used for teaching a structural type of bodywork. Because of this, the participants and I discovered an unexpected addition lining the walls: a large number of "structural" photos of model clients in their underwear demonstrating changes that occurred after their bodywork sessions. It was too difficult to remove these and so this became one of the contributors to the light-hearted and playful beginning for this group. The large room that we met in had a nice, uplifted feel, filled with windows, plants, and a white board to write on. Smaller rooms were available for the dyad performances and a small kitchen was used for our lunch break. The 10 participants, 5 girls, ages 12-17, and 5 women, ages 36-58, gathered on time and entered the room, interacting with each other in a sociable manner. Some people knew other participants while others did not. Introductions were made during the initial gathering while participants were getting settled in. My life partner, Beth, assisted through out the performance with any issues regarding recording equipment, setting up the space, and organizing break snacks so that I could be focused on being a part of this careering performance.

The performance occurred over a 4-hour period of time with the following structure:

Welcome and Overview of Study (15 mins.)
Shared Participant Introductions (25 mins.) - Participants pair up with someone they do not know and learn as much as they can about each other and then introduce each other to the large group.
Group Storytelling Activity (35 mins.) - In dyads, participants share a story about ways they liked spending their time as a school-age child. They then find a new partner, and share a story about an important person in their life.
Careering Performances (60 mins.)
Lunch Break (30 mins.)
Creation of Collages (30 mins.)
Large Group Reflection (45 mins.)

Large group performance.

Opening. Fairly soon after participants arrived, I called the group together to begin the careering session formally. The chairs were set up in a circle prior to the performance and participants chose where they sat when they entered the room. The teens who knew each other sat close together. The rest of the group mixed together, girls and women, while the two pairs of mother and daughter participants sat next to each other. While everyone settled into their seats, they continued to talk with each other until I signaled the beginning of the session.

During the opening, I shared briefly about my study, conveying my excitement and interest in exploring the concept of career in a way that is relevant for women and

girls. I introduced the women and girls to the study by sharing my intention for welcoming their ideas and observations, both as participants and researchers.

> *I would like to welcome you and thank you again for being a part of this research project and exploration of woman and careers. For the purpose of what we are doing here today, I would like to emphasize the word* exploration *instead of the word* research*, as the latter conjures up images of examining the researched under the microscope. In a traditional scientific approach, the observer is separate from what is being observed. I am assuming no objectivity here, but rather I am interested in a model of research that says that we are all researchers; therefore each of you is a participant as well as a researcher. What this means is that what we all generate here today is valuable to this study. As we go along here, please feel free to jump in with what you are thinking. Notice what you find yourself being curious about. Ask any questions that come to mind, and please feel free to share your opinions.*

During my introductory presentation, most participants were fairly quiet. I was asked about the school I was attending and the field of my degree. The liveliest commentary occurred when I asked the group what they thought of when I used the word *research*. One of the girls' responded "Lab rats!" followed by giggles and laughter. Indeed, the word *research*, to at least this individual, carried with it an image of being part of a controlled laboratory experiment being conducted on an unwitting subject. I chose this opportunity to share more about the type of research I was doing. It was unclear to me how much of what I was saying made sense to the participants. I was aware that my world and therefore my framework as a PhD student differed considerably from most of the participants. Spending too much time trying to explain the orientation of the study seemed akin to explaining a theatre performance prior to its execution. I chose to move on to the experience of the study or, in other words, the performance rather than belaboring its theoretical underpinnings.

Storytelling warm-up. Following the introduction, I initiated an exercise in which participants paired up with someone that they did not know in the group. The goal of the exercise was to find out as much as possible about the other person and then introduce them to the large group. Participants jumped in and shared a range of stories with each other, filling the room with their voices. The pairings occurred spontaneously and were mixed across the age groups. Having a specific task reduced their shyness and allowed participants to embark immediately on getting to know each other.

Next participants found a new partner and engaged in two more storytelling exercises. On was to share a story with each other about what they liked spending time doing as a school-age child and the other was to share a story about an important person in their life. Following these storytelling warm-ups participants chose a partner for their careering performances and moved to separate areas of the building, where each performance was recorded separately.

Scene I: Jessica and Jordan. Jessica and Jordan come together for this performance, meeting each other for the first time. Jessica is a 36-year-old Caucasian playwright and Jordan is 13 years old, Caucasian, and a student at a local middle school. Jordan lives in Israel but has come back to the United States for a year. Jessica and Jordan's storytelling takes about half the amount of time compared to the other participants. The tenor of their session is warm, friendly, and sprinkled with some shyness. They follow the suggested steps without adding or expanding any of the sections. Several times, it seems that they might engage in more of a conversation, but they both stop short of doing this. While Jessica and Jordan's performance follows closely the recommended instructions, they both name a significant accomplishment that informs their next steps.

Jessica begins the performance by sharing a story about a play that she wrote and recently produced. The play is considered a success by the local newspapers, and Jessica also considers her play a success. Jessica begins by describing the steps she took to get her play produced. When she talks about the play's success, Jessica firsts emphasizes what she did:

I directed.
I got to do all the castings.
I held auditions.

Jessica then switches to a description that fills the room with all the other people who were involved in the play.

We rehearsed for 3 months and put on a really great production.

This description shifts the success of the play to all the people who were involved in its production. It is no longer just Jessica's play, and the success is no longer just Jessica's success.

Jessica reflects further about what she learned from this experience:

I really believed in my ideas.
I followed through with my thinking.
I got enough people around me that I could tell respected me and loved me to make the project go well.
I think that was a real key piece of that: getting the support I needed, believing in myself and just going.

Jessica talks about the importance of love and respect from the other participants in the play. These are terms that are commonly used when speaking about a romantic relationship or an important friend and, when used together, are terms that are less likely to be used in a work environment. Jessica unabashedly speaks about the importance of receiving love and respect when she is working with others.

Jordan, the younger member of this pairing, is an important member of this performance. Without Jordan being present in this moment, Jessica would not be sharing her experience or her success. As Jessica continues, more ideas unfold.
Jessica imagines her future. She confides in Jordan by saying that she has a new idea that she has never shared with anyone. Jessica is clearly talented and creative. It is not hard to imagine that she has many interesting ideas. And, yet, it is almost surprising that she has not yet talked to anyone about what she is imagining, even though it is a fairly recent idea. She shares her idea with Jordan:

I have never told anyone this before.
I just came up with a great idea the other day of organizing an entire community project around the Platt River.
Doing some kind of interactive theatre, movement, maybe even opera.

Jessica describes coming up with this idea during a writing project she is doing with students where she teaches at a local university. She is not alone when her ideas about her river project are born. Jessica is surrounded by her students.

At first, Jessica surmises that she has "no idea" how she is going to do this project. Starting with not knowing, Jessica continues to imagine her project. She concludes that she wants to pull more people in to join her in the creation of this production. Jessica is going to begin by approaching theatre departments in middle schools and high schools. Jordan immediately responds,

Yeah! If you ever need a teenager in your play.

Jessica affirms:

Okay!

Jordan becomes excited about Jessica's idea and expresses an interest in participating. Jessica has the idea to reach out more to middle school and high school students. She shares for the first time her new idea with Jordan. Jessica and Jordan, as if doing improvisational theatre, are playing off of each other. Where each idea ends and the other begins is a little unclear. Did Jessica think about involving middle school and high school students before this performance? Had Jordan ever imagined being in a play before?

Jordan takes the lead as she begins to share a story while Jessica listens. Jordan recalls her experience of moving to Israel with her family. At that time, she did not know Hebrew.

I couldn't read or write.
I didn't have any friends.
I learned how to speak,
how to read,
and how to write.

I felt really proud
I could do that
That showed me,
If I really want to do something
I could do it.

Jordan was able to accomplish learning Hebrew. She surmises that, if she really wants to do something, she can do it. Jordan is proud of her accomplishment. She is sharing this with Jessica. Jessica responds by sharing that she would "really like to go to Israel sometime." Although it is not spoken, in this moment, it is Jordan who could be the guide for Jessica in Israel.

As Jordan reflects on what helped her succeed in learning Hebrew, she first speaks about herself:

I have a lot of determination.
I really believed that I could do it.

She follows this by speaking about a social aspect of this endeavor:

My parents always supported me and told me I could do it.
I made a lot of friends.

As Jordan explained learning Hebrew, it is clear that she did not learn it in a vacuum. She was in school with other children, living in a neighborhood, and relating to her family. She is also part of a country that has strong community-oriented practices such as the collective kibbutz.

Jordan imagines into her future that her determination will be helpful to her when she starts working. She has, as she says, proven twice that she can make such a significant change and thinks that will "really" help her. As Jordan speaks about her determination, she simultaneously performs this quality in the way that she is expressing herself. Next, Jordan compares herself to others, perceiving herself coming out ahead:

I know that I can do stuff that a lot of people can't.

As Jordan looks toward her future, she compares herself to other people. This serves as a favorable comparison, as Jordan surmises that she is more capable than some people, because she is able to "do stuff that a lot of people can't."

When Jordan imagines her next small step, she is uncertain and admits that she is currently struggling some in school with her English since she has come back to the United States. Jordan's resolution to her current struggle is to recall her previous success. Jordan performs with determination:

I did it once. I can do it again.

Jordan and Jessica decide that they are done with their performances. They turn off the recorder and "just talk."

Scene II: Ava and Shawna. As Ava's partner, Shawna asks Ava what she is most comfortable with: going first or second. They both agree that Shawna should begin the performance. Right from the start Ava and Shawna are coordinating their performance. Shawna is a 48-year-old African American woman who is a masters-level psychology student at a local university and Ava is a Caucasian, 13-year-old, middle-school student at a local middle school, and is the researcher's daughter.

Early in her career, Shawna shares that she did not know what she wanted to do. Someone mentioned to her that she was good at computers, so she got a job as a secretary at a computer company that handled networking needs for businesses, prior to the development of the Internet. She was promoted to a technical position and soon discovered that she "liked working with customers." This resulted in Shawna being considered an expert in the computer field. She speaks about her success first by talking about "the group":

> *The group I was in of technical people was really supportive.*
> *We liked teaching each other things,*
> *working together as a team.*
> *Rather than it being a thing of showing off or being competitive,*
> *we were really encouraged to get really good at what we did,*
> *so we could teach other people how to do it.*

Rather than only imaging Shawna as a singular careerist, climbing a ladder at a computer corporation, her narrative reveals a dynamic, socially rich work process.

Shawna draws on the way that Ava's face lights up when Ava talks about playing marimba music as an example of how she felt about her job. Shawna is referring to a story Ava shared in an earlier group warm up exercise. Ava gets it with, "Yeah!*"* Ava shared her excitement with Shawna earlier, and now both Ava and Shawna join in their expression of love: for Shawna it is a love of teaching and for Ava it is a love of playing marimbas.

Shawna turns another social corner.

> *I really, really liked being good at it.*
> *I really liked working with the customers.*
> *It is kind of a funny thing.*
> *It's like when you like being good at something,*
> *But it is not about showing off.*
> *Teaching someone else to love it in the way they can love it.*
> *They don't have to be just like you.*

Shawna talks about a math teacher from whom she loved learning. Her teacher *loved math* and would get excited when Shawna would beg her for extra homework. Imagining Shawna as a young student begging her math teacher for more homework is a

delightful image and also a wonderful example of a co-constructed experience. Together, Shawna and her teacher performed their love of math and learning. Shawna draws on her memory of being asked at work to teach a computer class, and says she found herself in this situation, being the one who loved what she was teaching while she explored ways to help the students to "love it in the way that they can love it." Shawna also recalls how her colleagues at work discovered different ways of "explaining things to each other" when they were working closely together as a group.

Shawna's ideas about a successful computer class are based on the students being able to go out and help their customers. She knows how important it is not to "look stupid." Shawna describes her performance on the first day of the class:

I set up all the books for the classroom.
I got kind of dressed officially.
I had to look official so that I looked like I knew what I was talking about.
I kind of had a reputation because I had gotten a few awards.
I didn't know anyone.
I had to stand out front and sound like I knew what I was talking about.

Although Shawna had "gotten a few awards" and had a positive reputation, she describes a performance of trying to look official. She chose the right clothes, set up her room appropriately, and was prepared to stand out front and sound like she knew what she was talking about. Shawna began this undertaking with uncertainty.

The turning point for Shawna occurred when she realized:

I was doing it because I loved it.
The important part for me wasn't that I looked good,
but that they got what they needed the way that they needed
and that they would understand it.

Soon the classroom was alive with the student's questions and Shawna's love of teaching.

We started having fun.

One of Shawna's most exciting parts of teaching this class involved a student who "did not think of himself as being very smart." During the third day of the class, when the students were paired, working on an exercise, Shawna noticed this student explaining the exercise to his fellow student:

His partner was understanding it!
He was saying, "Yeah, yeah, I see what you mean."
He was proud of himself.
He understood it and was explaining it in his own words.

Shawna's story of her success is interwoven with multiple social accounts. She first speaks about her experience working with "the group" where they would practice

learning and teaching each other. She then was asked to create a computer class. Shawna recalls a positive experience she had with her math teacher, and she also invites Ava into this moment of reflection on "loving something so much." Shawna began her class with some uncertainty. She "tried" to be what she imagined she should be. When she started to connect with the students and her love of what she was doing, the classroom was transformed and Shawna's generative teaching performance emerged. Shawna was successful. She became aware of this when she noticed that a student of hers was able to teach another student.

Shawna looks toward her future as she talks about being an MA Psychology student. She is concerned about leaving behind teaching, and because of this, she is uncertain about this career choice. She exclaims out loud to herself:

Shawna! What is it that you want to be when you grow up!

Shawna is leaving her next step open. She is not certain how she is going to bring together her teaching and psychology. Ava has been listening to Shawna's story. Ava is also an important part of Shawna's performance. Ava has an opinion about what Shawna has shared:

You are paying more attention to, like, how they are understanding,
instead of looking good.
I think that when you do that it will make you look better.

Shawna agrees:

Yeah . . . it is funny.
You do end up looking better.
And people remember you better.

Shawna and Ava agree that *not* paying attention to looking good paradoxically makes you look better. Success for Shawna and Ava is strongly connected to attending to the social elements of Shawna's teaching performance. If we were to create a video of Shawna teaching, the video camera would focus as much on the students and their interactions as it would on Shawna, bringing into focus the social elements of this performance. Ava and Shawna, in this performance, co-script their own, local understanding of success.

You stay in their minds.
And they admire you more,
even though you are not trying to be admired.

Ava confirms:

Yeah. That is exactly it. Yeah.

Ava begins her performance by returning to Shawna's earlier comment about what it is like to "do something that you really love."

I guess how you were saying, like when I talk about marimba.
How I get happy. . . .

Ava launches into her story about playing Marimba music for 6 years. This type of marimba music is originally from Zimbabwe. Ava is part of a youth marimba performance band, and she speaks about another marimba band, composed mostly of adults, in which her teachers are members.

Ava refers to her youth band as "still pretty professional but not even close" to her teachers' band. Ava is immersed in a rich social tradition of sharing and performing Zimbabwean music as she develops musical skills with her other band members in conjunction with her teacher's band that she admires.

The director invited Ava to join his band.

I was like WOW.

Ava met with the directors and her parents and together they explored the "good things about it and the bad things about it." Ava weighed the "huge commitment" that would be required if she joined this band with her teachers and her parents.

I got really scared . . . really scared.

Ava describes being scared and uncertain about how to proceed. She did her best to encourage herself to join the band while also considering the other aspects of her life.

I had time to think.
I also had to think about how high school was going to be.
I was spending more time with my friends.
I was valuing my friendships.
I wouldn't be a very social person.

Ava decided not to join the band. She considered the amount of time it would take to be involved in two performance bands at a time when she was *spending more time with friends*. She says she decided:

I don't think I could have done that.

Ava talks about her decision while also speaking about her life and what matters to her:

I think I made a good decision.
I would have been giving up my friendships.
I love marimba.
It is my life.

I don't think I could sacrifice my social life.
I also wouldn't do that well in school.

Ava concludes by addressing a larger audience:

I don't think that is how a teenager should live.

Ava turns to Shawna and shows her the book of poetry she has been writing recently. Inspired by having to make this difficult decision Ava has been writing more often. Shawna responds:

Wow!

Shawna turns to Ava and moves in close:

I have something I want to share with you.
You kind of summarized your decision around being really scared.
I can appreciate that.
You have a lot of perspective.
I want to acknowledge that.
You have a real good and really sound ability,
to take multiple things into account.
Not just what you like and don't like.
You were looking at what was important to you,
what is age appropriate.
That is a very interesting thing,
for a young person to do.
I just want to acknowledge you for that.
You are a very mature person.

Ava's decision does not mirror what typically might be considered a successful progression in the development of one's life trajectory. Accepting opportunities and moving up, whether it be in a company or a learning situation, is an agreed-upon social practice of success. Ava does not go along with a typical progression. She is able to say that she feels good about her decision. Shawna fills out alternative ways of seeing what Ava does. Shawna is impressed with Ava's ability "to take multiple things into account" and recognizes this as mature.

Ava also moves in close, mirroring Shawna in an interlocking performance:

I also was going to share one more thing.
You weren't into making yourself look good.
You were putting others before you,
instead of worrying,
"I can't mess up. I can't look bad."

Ava again turns to include a larger audience.

People need to understand this to do well in their work.
That is really good that you did that.

Shawna agrees.

I think so, too.
Thank you!

Shawna belts out her rendition:

I can criticize myself a lot.
The thing I found that helped me with that is
I so loved what I was teaching.
If you have something in your life that you so love,
it stops mattering.
You can't hold it down.
That is what is so neat about being around your friends.
You don't have to hold it back.

Ava joins in:

Yeah! You can have fun.

Shawna concludes:

When you love something you know you are just going to be silly.

Ava laughs:

Yeah!

Both Shawna and Ava speak about love. Love of teaching. Love of marimbas. Performing love facilitates Shawna's connections in the classroom. Ava's performance of her love for marimba music opens up a new opportunity. Ava decides to go a different direction: towards her social development as she enters high school. Both Ava and Shawna offer strong commentary on each other's careering performances. Most significantly, Ava and Shawna co-construct their own, local understanding of success, which stands in contrast to more traditional success narratives.

Scene III: Alexis and Sue. Sue takes the lead by encouraging her performance partner Alexis to find a story that she wants to share. Alexis and Sue go back and forth, remembering old Halloween costumes and school projects. Sue and Alexis are one of two mother-daughter pairings in this study. Alexis is a 15-year-old, Caucasian freshman attending the public alternative high school in town. Sue is Caucasian, in her early 50s, and the executive director of a women's resource center located at a local university.

Alexis is uncertain initially how to proceed, but she soon settles into a story about the different Halloween costumes she created in years past.

I made a pond.
I can't remember.
I remember making the pond,
and getting stuck in the neighbor's door.

Alexis then remembers her friend who wrote a play for school about this incident. Sue suggests that Alexis's costumes were not so traditional.

I am still devastated that I couldn't be an M & M.

Initially Alexis expresses her frustration about being encouraged by her parents to make her own costumes. She wanted to have the store-bought costumes like her friends.

I wanted to be in the cool group.

Halloween is a rich social tradition in the United States. Children and adults alike dress up in costumes and go out in public, performing an array of characters. It is a time when many people, young and old, turn toward the outrageous. Alexis first emphasizes wanting to fit in with her peers. She shifts her focus to another aspect of her experience:

I remember,
it always ended up being fine.
I don't think I had a costume that was close to traditional that I ever made.
I had a huge Afro.
I was a fairy.
I was a different type of fairy.

Alexis remembers the range of costumes that she created and begins to speak about the ways that she was different in a more positive tone. What was a social liability a few moments ago is becoming an asset.

Following the instructions, Sue asks Alexis about the qualities that she has that made this possible.

I have such a big imagination.
A lot of times,
I don't care what other people think.

In the long run you are liked better,
if you don't go along with the rest of the group.

Alexis, sporting her independence, reworks the social practice of fitting in. She speaks to her social group, although they are not literally present in the room. Alexis "doesn't care" what they think and she is able to look back and see that she is well liked for the ways that she does not go along with the rest of the group.

Alexis further proclaims her independence:

In the long run you feel a lot better about your self,
when you are your own person.
You don't have anyone you have to compare yourself to.
You are just fine with who you are.
I have always been different, majorly! (Laughter)

Alexis has developed a strong capacity for performing her independence. Upon first glance, Alexis presents a picture of an individual breaking away from social expectations. This part of the scene might include an image of Alexis standing off to the side of the group looking the other direction. She looks strong. If we were to tilt this image slightly we might see Alexis looking at other people that act in ways that are closer to how she wants to be. Alexis is not alone in her independent musings, but instead she is performing as an individual within a very dynamic social sphere.

When Sue asks her how she might use these qualities in the working world Alexis immediately responds:

Not working in a desk job.
Then I am compared to other people.

Alexis's understanding of the working world involves comparison to other people and sitting at a desk. Alexis challenges this image of work as she determines what is of interest to her. When Alexis speaks about her current job at a climbing gym she is closer to what makes sense to her. Alexis shifts away from an untenable world of work, fettered with comparison, to a friendly social environment:

That is why I like working in the gym.
It is just me and where I like to be the most.
There are just a lot of really nice people.

Imagining Alexis entering the climbing gym and being greeted by the "really nice people" provides a welcome contrast to Alexis's imaginations of a desk job. As Alexis speaks about her current job the social threads that exist for her become more evident.

The kids love me at the gym.
It's not like in a regular job.
It just wouldn't be like that.

A regular job sounds similar to Alexis's earlier mention of a desk job. Alexis imagines that "being loved" is not part of how things work at a regular job in the working world. Alexis turns towards another aspect of her work relationships.

Sometimes I have to be like a bitch
Because you can't be completely loose on climbing,
because there is safety involved.
I stay pretty chilled and calm.
I am just a fun person.

Alexis talks about a range of performances in which she engages in her job at the climbing gym. In order to address any safety issues, Alexis is a "bitch." Although this word is commonly used as a derogatory term towards women, Alexis's use of the word "bitch" carries with it a sense of strength. She is in charge in these moments, as she needs to be. It is not hard to imagine that the kids that Alexis is teaching to climb respond by following the safety instructions. When things are under control, Alexis is able to become chilled, calm, and a fun person. The kids love her. Alexis's success at her job is demonstrated by her relational bandwidth. She teaches her kids about climbing, which, on the one hand, is a sport to be taken seriously in order to attend to potential safety issues, but on the other hand, is a sport to enjoy.

Sue returns to an earlier topic of imagination:

How do you get to use your imagination there?

Alexis has an idea about this:

I don't really use my imagination much.
It is my imagination that has created what I do.
If I hadn't used my imagination around my costumes,
and become my own person,
I would be wearing mascara, curling my hair, and like focusing on my tan.
Well, which I am. . . .

By imagining, Alexis created unusual costumes. She wore these and became a range of characters, such as a pond or a fairy with an Afro. These are not typical costumes, and Alexis suggests that doing this helped her imagine other ways she might be that do not necessarily fit the mold of how a young woman should be acting. Alexis works in a climbing gym teaching climbing. She does not wear mascara or curl her hair, although she does sometimes pay attention to her tan Alexis is suggesting that a holiday such as Halloween has served as an important venue for her ability to imagine and then perform a range of identities. In turn, this has helped her set foot in the working world in a way that she has been freed from a desk job and competition to a world of shared adventure with her climbing peers and students.

Sue wonders how Alexis might continue to use her imagination in the future. Alexis returns to the moment:

Right now I am living my dream.
I am living what I always imagined.
I am living out who I am.

Alexis is involved in the climbing world and is able to perform who she is, and she is satisfied with this. When she tries to reflect on the qualities she has that have been helpful, Alexis concludes:

I think that I tap into myself.
I have a strong sense of who I am.
Lots of people view me as being lots older.

Alexis knows who she is. It is apparent that Alexis performs her self with confidence, fitting nicely into the climbing world. This is working well for her.

Sue offers her thoughts:

So like when you are in that place of having a strong sense of yourself,
it leaves you being able to do things that work well for you.

Sue and Alexis respond back and forth about when Alexis has had a strong sense of her self. In Alexis's story, they discover that Alexis did not have this experience in middle school:

I lost all my dreams.
I just wanted to try and be like everyone else.
I stopped wanting to be an astronaut or a doctor.
You feel so put down, even by the teacher.
The teachers don't think much of you.

Sue has "never put all this together":

I always wondered why
When you went away to that astronaut camp.
You had such a thing about wanting to be an astronaut,
Wanting to be a firefighter,
A paramedic.
They all went by the wayside.

Sue wants to know what is happening for Alexis now when she considers these possible careers. Alexis is uncertain:

There is no way I could be an astronaut or a doctor.
I know that.
Or maybe I don't.
But.
I don't know.

Alexis is not sure where she stands when she reflects on some of her previous future dreams: are these a possibility or not? On the one hand, Alexis has struggled to remain confident and imagine a future wherein she can become a doctor or an astronaut. On the other hand, Alexis as a rock climber and teacher of this sport at the age of 15 is a powerful image of Alexis meeting a challenge, although perhaps in a less traditional way. Sue continues to follow the thread of Alexis's "lost dreams" and to wonder if there is a way for Alexis to bring back those qualities that have helped her in the past. Alexis responds with:

Feeling really good about myself.
I do feel good about myself.
But not quite like I would like to.
I do have some body image issues.

Alexis does feel good about herself, and this is evident in her story. At times, Alexis also does not feel good about herself as much as she would like to. These two notes remain side by side: the feeling good and not feeling as good as Alexis would like. Both these notes sound in contrast to each other and are marked by different performances. Alexis previously referred to being uninterested in the type of comparison with others that occurs in a desk job. She is able to rework her struggle to fit in to "being better liked for being her own person." She now sometimes struggles with her body image. She feels good about herself. She would like to feel even better about herself.

Alexis presents multiple performances of her self. She also presents an overall careering performance that includes different twists and turns, beginning with her childhood Halloween costumes. Her success is best known to her as she performs her current job as a climbing instructor. Alexis's ending sparks Sue's beginning, as if they are in an improvisational performance, creating what is next, in response to what has just happened. Sue carries forward the theme of "feeling good about yourself."

It is interesting.
The whole thing you brought up about feeling good about yourself.
It really does matter.

Sue's story is about a previous career, when she worked as a coordinator of a national organization, which develops substance abuse prevention programs in the public schools. Prior to this job, Sue was a teacher and then a school counselor.

Sue begins her story reflecting on the important people she met while working at the substance abuse prevention program.

I started to do a lot of work with Jill.
I went away to be part of a two-week training.
I met Nancy.
I met John.
I got close with Jill, close with Mary.
I ended up meeting Lisa too.

Sue brings on stage the people she met and either worked with or got to know during this time in her life where she experienced a "big shift." Sue's social relationships are front and center for her, as she remembers:

I got so invested in this work,
and had so much fun.
I got so much good feedback that I was good.
I just got more into it.

For Sue, receiving good feedback helped her move forward in her new career as coordinator of the substance abuse prevention program. The image that comes to my mind as I listen is a group of people dancing together and egging each other on. This is definitely in contrast to what Alexis described earlier as a "desk job," invoking an image of a solitary worker in competition with her office mates.

Sue fills out the picture of her careering:

The work I was doing was inspiring.
I had fun.
I got to meet cool people to work with.
I was at the same time getting recognized for it.
I was continuously learning.

Sue describes a rich social learning environment. She is learning, with her colleagues, as they put on retreats for teachers and students.

Sue identifies the qualities that helped make this experience possible:

I was willing to take risks,
and step into new territory.
I had gone to school.
I had studied to be a counselor.
I had been a teacher.
I was willing to take it out of what I thought I was suppose to be doing,
and opened it up to other ideas.

Sue describes her working performance as stepping into new territory, which requires that she be willing to move beyond her previous performance of what she is "suppose to be." She discovers, through multiple steps and social feedback, that she is talented in this role.

In the beginning of her story, Sue named the people she became acquainted with during this time. She now highlights the social structure of this job.

I have pretty good interpersonal skills.
Being able to work with other people on an idea.
There wasn't a lot of independent work.

Sue returns to where she began and Alexis left off:

Well, you know.
One of the things that happened then was
Having a sense of confidence in myself.
Up until that point I hadn't had a lot of that.

Sue now remembers who she was before she began the substance abuse prevention work: she did not have much confidence. Sue's previous work performance as a teacher, or a school counselor, which were jobs she was "suppose" to be doing did not include "much confidence." Sue's job as the director of a national organization that valued working closely together with her colleagues resulted in a different work performance for Sue: one that enhanced her confidence.

Sue begins to explore how the qualities she has discovered in her past work could be of use for her future work.

I could do anything,
if those qualities are about being creative.
and creating,
taking risks,
stepping outside of how things had always been.
Accessing those good relationship skills.

Sue comments that she "is successful" at her current job as the director of a women's resource center at a university. When Sue imagines her working future, she is "not sure" what might be next or how she might apply these qualities.

Alexis has an idea:

I always thought that you would be a good gym teacher.

Sue is reminded by Alexis's idea that it is also important to include

a sense of humor and a sense that you have to take things lightly.

Alexis continues to wonder what is involved in being a gym teacher. Is this for Sue, or is Alexis also trying on this idea?

Do you have to have a degree to be a gym teacher?

Sue fills out the picture of what is involved in becoming a gym teacher. She then gathers another idea related to this topic.

Which brings up another idea.
I need to do something with my body.

Sue reflects on how much she enjoyed taking teachers on retreats, doing ropes courses and spending time outdoors.

Sue then recalls memories of hiking with Alexis:

If we went hiking with other people,
you and I joked about how,
we are the free spirited ones.
You and I would go off the trail!!!
I think this is what this is about for both of these things we talked about.
It was about going off the trail!

Alexis agrees while adding a bit of humor:

Yes, except now they would say that is bad because it is erosional.

Sue picks up on this idea and incorporates it:

You can go off the trail.
And know that you are going to have a greater impact on other people,
and things around you.
So, there is an element of doing it with care.
This is exciting for me to think about.

Sue breaks off into another brief story about her friend, Jill who is a successful undercover detective and was "wild and crazy." She was helpful to Sue as a reminder that you can "step off the trail." Sue asks Alexis what this means to her. Alexis responds:

I just always go back to the fact that I am my own person.

Sue asks Alexis if she still thinks about being a firefighter. Alexis answers:

I don't know.
I have no interest in making a bunch of money.
Or getting married,
or being stereotypical successful.
I feel like teaching at the gym is being successful.
I can see myself someday,
becoming the coach of the climbing team.

Alexis *steps off the trail* when she imagines her life unfolding in a way that is not stereotypically successful. Sue and Alexis are constructing an understanding of success that allows for making nontraditional choices for themselves as women. Alexis turns away from "moving up" in the world and instead places value on doing something she wants to do.

Alexis excitedly speaks about liking her climbing coach "so much":

I found this person that is all the things that I want to be.
There is my example.
I found that interesting.

As Alexis speaks about what has helped her imagine a fitting future, Sue is reminded that in the past, she herself had a hard time imagining "something else out there" until she made a change. She "didn't know" what was possible until she came across it.

If I don't allow myself to be open to them, then I will miss a lot.

Alexis indicates that she is able to imagine a future that includes an exciting possibility. Sue wants to be sure for herself that she does not forget that there are other options. Alexis takes the lead, performing the possibility that *stepping off the trail* is close at hand. Sue contributes a practical thought, which is that, in order to dream, it helps to feel like one's basic needs are being met.

Alexis has another idea:

I wouldn't mind just living in a van.
Hopefully my parents
would help me out if anything major came up.

Sue agrees:

As your mom, I would.
Especially if it was
for the purpose
of you exploring something else.

Sue and Alexis, back and forth, co-construct what it means to live a meaningful life. They take turns leading. For a moment, Alexis jumps ahead as she throws out ideas. Sue is reminded not to forget the possibilities. Alexis looks back to make sure that her mom is going to be behind her if she does take risks, like living in a van. One version of Sue and Alexis's creation is:

Stepping off the path.
Remembering there are options out there.
Don't take a desk job.

Build in some safety measures.

Sue knows how important it is to feel confident that you can cover your basic needs. Alexis reminds Sue to imagine. Sue offers her support for Alexis for when she is out on her own. Together Sue and Alexis discover how to move forward.

Scene IV: Claire and Amy. Claire is Caucasian, 15 years old, and a freshman at one of the local high schools. Amy immediately engages in a helpful way, showing her interest. Amy is Caucasian, in her late 40s, and is Claire's mother. Claire leads the performance, without a conversation with Amy, by telling the first of two stories about a fundraising event in which she was involved.

I think the two times
I did something that made me feel good is UNICEF.
We worked for something like a month before,
with a ton of people.

Claire presents a dynamic social picture right from the start and builds upon it.

We did a press conference.
We danced.
UNICEF is for saving the children fund.
We did dances.
We had speakers come.
We raised $3,000.
We started working on it about a month before.

Claire changes her focus and speaks briefly about what she did as part of this event. As she does this, Claire as a leader begins to emerge.

I was a signing leader.
I was a big flag carrier.
I had a flag that had faith on it.
I lead everyone in sign language.
I was in charge of three things.
I was with some of my friends.

As Claire talks about her fundraising experience, she speaks rapidly, as if she were in a room filled with her friends and other kids as they excitedly gather their resources to help other children in need. When Claire describes her involvement in this fundraiser by talking about the things that she did, her leadership becomes evident. When Claire speaks about what was accomplished by the fundraiser, she reverts back to speaking about the group.

We raised $3,000!

Claire is about to leap into her next story when Amy slows her down:

Wait! I want to know more about what you liked doing.

Claire's first response,

I don't know,

expands to:

I liked doing the whole thing.
The dancing.
Being with the first graders and signing.

As Claire enters her next story, Amy again asks Claire to explain a little more about the event she to which she is referring.

The crop walk
is a walk that was long.
We raised money,
and awareness for feeding people and children.
I don't know if I actually got sponsors to pay.
We did raise a lot of money.

Claire is uncertain if she herself collected money but she again references the group when she talks about the success of the event and the money that was raised. Both of her stories involve people coming together to help others through raising money, which serve as an opportunity for Claire to perform on a larger social stage by addressing the needs of those in different parts of the world with whom she may not typically come into contact.

Claire concludes:

I think those are two things that are about helping.
You can go now.
I have no more stories.

Amy returns to the instructions for the careering process and asks Claire about the qualities that she has that are evident in her two stories. Claire responds:

I guess, it was helping with the first graders.
I was adamant about helping.
I made sure it was O.K.
I guess, that was my persuasive personality.
My, I don't know.

My wanting.
Whatever big word that is.

Interspersed with "I don't know*"* and "I guess*,*" Claire taps powerful expressions: "I was adamant," "my persuasive personality," and "my wanting." Side by side, Claire's uncertain and powerful expressions are both part of her careering performance.

Claire reflects on what she likes about the second fundraiser that she participated in.

I like walking and running and athletics.
I like to be with my friends.

Claire and Amy begin to wonder together about how Claire might use these qualities in the working world. Claire says,

I could do a lot of stuff with liking to work with kids.
I could get a scholarship and keep doing sports.
These experiences made me more aware of stuff.
I like helping kids around the world.

Amy wonders about combining all three of Claire's interests:

Help kids do athletic activities to benefit a good cause!

Claire agrees that that "could work."

As Claire imagines a next small step she can take in her life to use her qualities and interests, she returns to wanting to help again with the UNICEF fundraiser. Amy asks if there is something in which Claire can become involved at the high school she is entering, and Claire already knows about a high school program called "Breaking Down the Walls," which addresses challenging social stereotypes and encourages students to reach across those boundaries. Claire is interested in helping with this program.

Amy shares with Claire what she has heard, performing her caring for Claire:

A. So it sounds like you have identified three things that you like doing.
You like sports,
doing things that we will call repairing the world,
doing something that helps people.
C: *Sure, I agree with that.*
A: That's a lot to know!
C: Yes!
A: Laughter.

Claire quite willingly jumps into the role of interviewer of Amy by asking her to share her story. Amy is not quite ready to move on. She shares another comment with Claire. Amy is caring and affirming of Claire's "wanting" in action.

It was pretty impressive seeing you do those things.
You were the only one in our family that did the whole crop walk.

Amy begins her performance, adjusting her lens as she looks more closely at what matters to her.

I am having a hard time coming up with something for mine.
Maybe you can help me.

Amy turns towards Claire. Claire quite willingly accepts the offer, using this as an opportunity to assert her self.

A high point in your life will be when you stop being an overprotective mother.

Amy responds goodheartedly to Claire's challenge and returns to reflecting on her life.

Well, I don't have one big story.
I have several parts of my life that I have liked a lot.
That were inspirational.

Amy begins her first story, mirroring one of Claire's themes.

I do like doing things that benefit other people,
like making food for the sick people of our congregation.
Or making a meal and delivering it to someone that is grieving.
I do a lot of those things on a day-to-day basis.
Helping out.

Both Amy and Claire begin their performances with other people on stage; Claire is surrounded by first graders and Amy is offering warm cooked food to people in need. Amy and Claire's work imaginings both highlight social engagement. Amy talks about a familiar, yet satisfying role that she performs frequently: caregiving within her community. Amy engages caregiving as a member of her congregation and is able to speak about this experience as inspirational.

Amy takes a step towards another type of story, revealing another aspect of her identity.

Climbing fourteeners (mountains that are 14,000 feet above see level) *makes me feel great.*
After the fact.
You can understand because you have done that too.

Claire exclaims that climbing a 14,000-foot mountain does not make her feel great. She just wants to get home so that she can "hang out" with her friends. As Claire asserts herself, Amy pushes forward:

For me, it is inspirational to organize and make it happen.
You are usually doing it with friends or with you or Jen.
The energy it takes to climb
and persevere
and be so determined to get to the top.
You get to the top, look around and look at the clouds and are above everything else.

This story expands our knowledge of Amy. First she is a concerned and generous caregiver in her community; now she is an adventuresome spirit who hikes to the top of mountain peaks. A social thread remains evident. Amy hikes with her friends or children and is inspired by creating an adventure that includes the important people in her life. When Amy reaches the top of the peak, rather than having conquered the mountain, she describes a powerful moment where she sees the clouds and is looking from above.

Amy comments on the meaning of this activity for herself:

There is just something inspirational about climbing a big mountain.
It doesn't really benefit other people other than a group of people doing it together, and creating a sense of community.
But that is something that I really feel proud of having done.

Amy tries to reconcile her two performances, each decidedly different, yet both performed by the same character. She does not consider climbing the mountain as being helpful to others, "other than a group of people together and creating a sense of community."

Amy comments that her next story "fits in more" with her theme of being helpful to others.

I taught English in Indonesia.
Taking the risk of going to live in another country for a year.
Studying the language, living with a family.

Amy in Indonesia again suggests she is an adventuresome character who is willing to take the risks required to live in a different culture. Although Amy does not think that she was "especially good at teaching," she weaves together her understanding of why living in Indonesia is helpful to others.

I think that that cross-cultural experience was incredible for me personally.
I think that it really benefits the community in terms of being aware of other cultures,
valuing other cultures.

When I am here,
making contact with people from different countries.
Trying to befriend people.
Making it easier for them to do cross-cultural experience.
Staying in contact with different people.
Exposing you all to different cultures.
Being aware of different value systems and communities.

Amy has multiple thoughts about the value of her past experience as a young women teaching in Indonesia and concludes that, fundamentally, this story illustrates an important venue for helping people. She also makes a connection with the ways she continues to perform her cross-cultural experience as a community member and mother.

Amy now extends her performance to include her own careering musings.

I would like to do that more.
In terms of careering,
I would be interested in cross-cultural experiences and training.

Amy talks about the qualities that made this possible:

Being pretty daring.
From traveling when I was 19 in the Middle East.
It gave me an experience of independence.
Being independent made it possible.
Being able to take risks.
Being willing to try new things.

As Amy tries to imagine using these qualities now in her life, she hesitates:

It is a little harder to do those things now.
I have to keep remembering that it is OK to do them.
I feel pretty committed to taking care of family.
Making sure all the day-to-day things get done.
I have to keep remembering that it is good to be independent.
It is good to try to take risks.

Amy talks about her two different performances and the challenge for both to remain relevant at the same time. It is as if, Amy, the caregiver who attends to the day-to-day things in life for her family, easily dominates the scene. Amy, the adventurer, most likely had center stage when she was a young woman.

Amy's performance includes Claire quietly being present on stage with her. Claire earlier asserted herself suggesting that Amy make changes in her parenting style. Claire again has a suggestion for how Amy might incorporate more of the qualities named in her current life.

C: Taking risks with your kids and letting them be their selves.
A: Good point. (Laughter) Good point. Trying to take risks around parenting.

Claire has more ideas about how she can engage these qualities.

Making time to do athletic things.
And inspiring things.
Being with friends and getting their support.
Trying new things.

Amy has important suggestions for herself as she considers her next career move:

Value what I am interested in.
Create something.
Rather than, "I am supposed to accept whatever would work."
I think it is going to be important
to not just accept a role,
because it is easiest
or it's offered.
But try to go out there.
Create things.
Try new things.

I imagine Amy moving to the front of the stage as she speaks in a different voice than the one with which she began her performance. She looks more youthful. It is as if her younger, more adventuresome young woman has taken hold and is kindly reminding and encouraging Amy's current self, which she performs on a day-to-day basis, to lift her head and not forget about the mountains and the world of other meanings that can exist for her.

Amy turns back towards Claire:

You bring up a good point.
Trying new ways of parenting.
Being a little more flexible.
Being a risk taker.

Amy repeats out loud her own recommendations for herself as Claire listens.

Trying to create what I want
instead of making do
or taking the easy path.
Remember that independence
and the fearlessness of my youth.

Amy looks again towards Claire:

A: *Ok. And then for parenting. . . .*
C: *Taking risks. Letting go.*

Amy adds:

Being flexible.

Amy and Claire's performance comes to an end, without any further comments. Imagining them on stage, their performance might end with each of them having a slight smile, indicating that something just happened that is different from their regular life and regular interactions.

Scene V: Jackie and Jenna. Immediacy exists between Jenna and Jackie as they begin their performance, diving into their storytelling. They ask each other questions and share their different thoughts and ideas. Jenna is fifty-two, Caucasian, and currently works as a librarian at one of the local high schools, which Jackie's boyfriend attends. Jackie is Caucasian, 13 years old, and in eighth grade at a bi-lingual middle school in town. Jenna, having been a high school social studies teacher for many years and now a high school librarian, demonstrates ease as she relates to Jackie and shows a strong interest in her world. In turn, in her interactions with Jenna, Jackie responds with enthusiasm and interest.

Jenna steps up to begin the performance:

Okay.
So do you want me to go first?

Jenna starts by talking about the drug prevention program, in which she worked, during the 1980's as a trainer with another study participant, Sue. Jenna shares some of the ideas on which the program was based.

If teachers are unhappy
and if the environment is terrible
nothing is going to change.
A place where teachers are happy,
and teachers are healthy,
that will ripple down to kids.

Jenna proceeds to describe how the program worked. She includes the people that she works with:

We were trained in how to put on these huge conferences.
We would get teachers together.
We would spend time feeding their hearts and souls.
There were workshops on how to treat kids with respect.

I don't think we could get away with it now.

Jenna speaks fondly of this program, referencing her colleagues and presenting a group endeavor rather than her own individual work experience. Being aware that, currently, the likelihood of a similar program existing is slim, Jenna compares that work with working in a school now. Jenna recognizes her loss.

Jenna expands her description of the group of people with whom she worked, presenting a powerful connection.

It was so neat.
There was a group of people that really believed this.
Sometimes it felt like a cult.
There were our workshops.
Then we would get together.
We would design these retreats for teachers.

Jenna continues to talk about the retreats with the teachers, drawing out this remarkable experience. Jenna's descriptions are filled with group images. She comments that at times her work felt "cult" like. Rather than a sole leader being in control of this group, a dynamic group of people that collaborates with shared beliefs guided this "cult." Jenna concludes, "We taught teachers to have fun again."

Jenna fast-forwards to her work now, continuing her narrative of loss:

The money went away.
We all got into testing.
You think about training people to be better people rather than better testers.
It gives you a feeling about how stressed kids must be
and how stressed teachers must be.

Jenna turns towards Jackie:

Je: Do you feel that?
Ja: Yeah. Its like we need to prepare for the CSAP [Colorado Student Assessment Program].
Je: Do you think everyone gets more stressed?
Ja: Yeah. I see it. Everyone gets more "I don't want to go to school."

Jenna returns to relishing in what worked so well in her previous job.

It was great working with other teachers that have the same belief.
You have to teach to the whole kid.
And you have to work with the whole teacher.
It's not how well you can do a worksheet,
it's how well you can treat somebody.

Jackie responds with excitement:

That is cool!

Jackie is Jenna's performative partner for today, while at the same time she is a student in the same school district in which Jenna is employed. She steps into Jenna's performance, affirming Jenna's experience while also sharing her own perspectives. This becomes a mutually affirming process.

Jenna talks about the important qualities that made this possible:

I use to be pretty bossy.
I really learned from working with this group of people
to trust other people.
The ideas that we would come up with as a whole group
were way better than the ones that I could come up with myself.
I was like a control freak and wanted everything to turn out so well.
It was really great to learn that early in my life
that I could trust somebody.

Jenna's work provided a rich performative venue where she was able to become a group thinker and creator, which was a role previously unknown to her. Jenna was transformed through her group connection, from "being pretty bossy*"* to "trusting other people*."* Trusting other people opened doors for Jenna to work closely with the group and enjoy the many advantages of this collaboration.

Jenna tells herself, "I don't have to be responsible for all this" as a reminder that she can "let go" and "trust that things will come out good." She turns to Jackie:

Je: Are you an overly responsible person?
Ja: Well, I am an only child.
I like things my way.
When I met Ava, she is the same way.
She likes things her way so we bumped heads for a long time.
Je: Are you guys best friends?
Ja: Yeah. We are like sisters.
It kind of made me back down more and be open to other people's ideas.
I use to be a lot bossier.
Je: What about working in groups?
Ja: I like groups.

Jackie describes what it is like for her to work in groups at school. She describes the way the group figures out who is good at what and then they divide up the tasks accordingly. Jackie concludes, "Groups are fun." Jenna and Jackie are effectively underscoring the value of learning how to work together with other people. They both

acknowledge that this is not always an easy task, and they each acknowledge for themselves and then together, that they have grown in this area.

Jenna reflectively, remembers when she started to learn more about working in groups:

It took me a long time to trust the group.
When I was in school things were pretty individual.
Now there is more group work.
I think those are really good skills.

Jenna speaks in more detail about why she finds working in a group beneficial:

I am good at coming up with ideas.
I am not as good at following through with them.
I also come up with really radical ideas.
I think other people have to take my ideas and go more to center.

Jenna's success is intricately linked to working closely with her colleagues. She ascertains that her ideas alone may not go very far without the contributions of others.

As Jenna imagines these qualities in the working world, she first comments on her teaching background.

I think I was a good teacher.
I wasn't a great teacher.
I have done a lot of team teaching.
That is the same as doing those workshops.

Jenna inquires whether Jackie has any team-taught classes, and Jackie responds that she does not. Jenna says she "had so much fun" team-teaching in contrast to the ways that teaching can "be so isolating."

I think the idea of working with some else is really great.

As Jenna imagines a next small step she can take to include the qualities of working more closely with others, she starts to rework her current job as a high school librarian.

I kind of have it because
the library is a space where I can do whatever I want.
But I am back to where I was before.
I am all by myself.
I should start thinking about getting students or a panel together
to help me think about what I should do.
I feel isolated.

As Jenna remembers her previous job, she holds this in contrast to where she is now. As she does this, she has clear advice for herself. Her library, which is, on the one hand, a space where she finds she can do whatever she wants is, on the other hand, missing a very important element: collaborators, whether they be students or colleagues. Jenna does her best and enjoys herself the most, in concurrence with others.

Jenna's final rendition takes her through one more story about when she was learning experiential activities to use in her workshops. In one game, she walked around blindfolded with the other participants in hopes of finding someone. She realized then and is also reminding her self now,

I don't have to do this by myself.

Jenna, as if blindfolded, is reaching out again to make contact, so that she is not alone. Jackie, who is close by, becomes the other in this moment, as Jenna reaches out, performing what is possible in her work now.

Jenna makes contact with Jackie and wants to know what Jackie has come up with for her story.

Ja: Well, I am bi-lingual.
I have been studying Spanish for ten years.
Je: Did you go to a bi-lingual elementary school?
Ja: I started learning Spanish at 5 years old in Costa Rica.

Jackie talks about living in Costa Rica with a Spanish-speaking family when she was 5 years old. At the time she only spoke English, and was delighted when she learned how to "communicate somehow." Jackie introduces the family she lived with:

I had a little brother and an older brother
It was the thing that I really wanted because I was lonely.
I am really outgoing.
I love people.
I was alone in my house.

Jackie extends the theme of loneliness in contrast to connection, brought on stage previously by Jenna.

Jackie gathers the elements of her story:

I am bilingual because I study Spanish.
My parents and I are Quakers.
Eva and I met in sixth grade.
In seventh grade, the Iraq war started.
We were at Taco Bell one day.
My dad and we started yelling about it,
"This is so bad!"
We decided that we were going to protest

Ava and I organized a protest at age 12.

Jenna, is on stage, listening and responding to Jackie's story, asking multiple questions. Jackie also brings on stage her father and Ava, one of the study participants and her best friend and co-organizer of this protest. Jenna describes how the idea of the protest was born in the space between her, her father, and Ava. The birth of this idea spurred both Jackie and Ava into action as they began to create their grand performance.

We got announcements.
"We are from Everest Middle School.
We are going to protest!"
We got 15-20 kids,
Hispanics, Anglos, a guy from Algiers.
We had so many different kids there.
We wrote up a thing about what we were doing.
We wrote it in English and Spanish.
Our name was Bilingual Kids for Peace.

Jenna wants to know how Jackie and Ava came up with their name. Jackie moves center stage, speaking poignantly:

We figured that if you have diversity,
then you have more acceptance;
with acceptance you have peace and understanding.
I don't have any need for violence.
I accept people for who they are.
That is how I expect to be treated, as well.
I think part of that is,
I have been in a bilingual school my entire life.

As Jackie talks about what she believes, she performs her personal manifesto, mirroring what she has learned from her family, being raised a Quaker, going to a bilingual school, and her co-performance with her friend Ava.

Jenna eggs Jackie on to keep sharing more of the details of the story. Jackie willingly follows Jenna's query, and the protest as a performance becomes more evident.

We made phone calls to all our close friends
Call whomever you want to call and make them come!
We called the newspaper.
"We are going to do this protest."
We got on cable TV.
We got in three newspapers.
It was fun.
We made posters.
We made peace signs.

We bought roses and lilies and handed them out to people,
with our sheets of information.

Jackie's animated description produces images, as if we are viewing short video clips. As she talks about receiving publicity, Jackie consistently uses the pronoun "we." She determinedly presents the protest as a shared performance, with shared success.

Jenna participates now in Jackie's success. She is affirming by acknowledging Jackie and her friend for what they accomplished,

Je: So did you and Ava come up with those ideas?
Ja: Yeah. We organized it all without an adult.
Je: That is cool! That is quite an accomplishment.

Jackie provides more images of the protest:

Almost everyone was "Wow, this is so cool."
A lot of people came and sat with us.
One guy said, "You better think about what you are doing."
And I said," We thought plenty about it."
The guy said, "We have to help out the new generation."
I said, "This is making more problems for me to clean up.
I am the new generation!
Why do people think that this is going to make it better for the new generation?
No, it's not!!!"

Jackie, front and center speaks to a larger audience as she makes her ideas clear. As she speaks to Jenna, she is also speaking to anyone who thinks that the Iraqi war is going to make things better for the new generation. Jackie is performing confidence and purpose through sharing her views publically, first, during the protest and then again, in her performance with Jenna.

Jenna spurs on and asks Jackie, "How were the two of you able to pull that off?"

Ja: We are both really outgoing.
We both have ideas.
We both have motivation.
We both have really supportive parents.
Je: It also sounds like you know how to network.

Jenna peers in from another angle:

How come you weren't worried what other people were going to think?

Jackie emphatically responds, "I never worried what people thought." Jackie continues describing other ways that she does not focus on what other people think, such as wearing make up the way she wants to and snowboarding topless when a friend

challenges her to. She describes herself as a "daredevil." Jenna stays close to Jackie's descriptions each step of the way, while also reflecting back on her own experience. She shares this with Jackie:

In high school, I don't think I cared, but I wasn't much of a risk taker.
I was always really jealous of those people that were.
"Why don't I have it and you do?"
I was pretty confident.
But there was this other level.
This zest for life.

If Jenna were in high school now, it is likely that she would be *jealous* of Jackie and her ability to be a risk taker. In this performance, Jenna is remarking on Jackie's ability to take risks. By hearing Jackie's story, does this possibility of risk- taking come a little closer to enhancing Jenna's performative range in her life?

Jackie amps up her performance.

I am a risk taker.
If I want to go out for something, I will go for it.
I want to be a rock star.
I love people.
I like a lot of attention.

It is as if Jackie has pulled out her guitar on stage. She is singing a song about her love of the outrageous. Jackie talks about the band that she has created with a group of friends. They play punk rock. It turns out that Jackie's boyfriend, who gave her the guitar, is a student at the school where Jenna is a librarian. Jackie describes her boyfriend as a "troublemaker" and shares that he "shouts in the library.*"* Jackie's boyfriend is now in on the action, shouting in Jenna's library. Perhaps he could help Jenna imagine ways to create an engaged library space.

Jenna wants to know Jackie's boyfriend's name.

Ja: Jake
Je: It is my goal to know100 names by the end of the semester.
Ja: That is awesome
.

Will Jenna meet Jake?

Jackie talks about what she wants in her life. Poetically, she unfurls her dreams of her future:

I write two songs or poems a day.
I want to get my point across.
I want to help out.
I want to make a lot of money.
And build a huge house.

I want to have homeless people come and live with me.
And then go to the Humane Society and adopt all the old cats and dogs.

Jenna catches Jackie's last line:

I always thought that if everyone would just adopt one animal . . .

Jenna and Jackie's performance ends midstream, leaving other potential conversations unknown to us. Most likely when they turned off their recorder they continued to talk and wonder as they transitioned to making their collages as part of the next activity.

Lunch break, collages, and group reflections.

Lunch break. Following the dyad performances the group chooses to break for a simple meal for lunch before beginning their collages. Pizzas are provided in the kitchen area and group members gather gradually, because they finish their performances at different times. At one point everyone has joined in the same area, piled on the couch and enjoying the pizza. Laughter and comments are shared about the lack of self-consciousness while everyone eats ambitiously.

Collages. Following the lunch break the women and girls return to the large room and begin to create their collages (see Appendix A). There is flute music playing in the background, which creates a quiet and reflective component of the performance. Materials such as cut out words and pictures from magazines are available for participants to create a collage reflecting what they learned or discovered during their careering performances. Some participants interacted while others created quietly by themselves. After approximately 30 minutes the group rejoins, sitting in a circle for the purpose of sharing the collages and reflecting on their performances.

Group reflections. Jenna begins the group reflections, choosing to comment on her experience of the pairings:

I appreciated being paired
younger with older.
It is nice to learn from the younger generation.
That was cool.

Jenna expands on her thoughts:

Valuing the energy and commitment
and the talent that young woman have
that we don't often get a chance to talk about.

Jackie responds to Jenna's comments:

I liked Jenna.
She is so cool.
She is so awesome.

After a few back and forth comments occur about where Jackie is going to go to high school next year. Jackie share more about her experience.

She is so cool and we talked a lot about different things.
The story I shared was about Ava and I organizing a protest against the war
She was so supportive of it.
She was all for it.
She told me, you know, I should run for president.
That is what I have always wanted to do:
to just to go out there and do something.
She seems like the kind of women that I will be when I grow up.

Sue jumps in agreeing and supporting:

Yeah!

Ava recalls organizing the protest with Jackie and comments:

We were so proud.

Enthusiastically Shawna talks about her careering performance with Ava, while also referring to Jenna's earlier comments:

This kind of takes off from what Jenna was saying.
I really enjoyed the pairing of the older and younger women.
I am a pretty enthusiastic person,
even though I am an older woman (laughter).
I can be in a lot of situations where I can feel pretty silly and exuberant.
It was so wonderful being with Ava because Ava is a very wise person.
Ava thinks deeply about things and has a lot of perspective as a young woman.
She has a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of exuberance in her expression.
The ways that women, that we put our emotion into our speaking and include in our exclamations.
We can get silenced and suppressed.
We are supposed to be precise and intelligent.
Our voices are not suppose to go up and down that way
and our bodies are not suppose to move that way when we are talking about things.
It is so wonderful to be with Ava to remember that wisdom has a lot of enthusiasm with it,
has a lot of exclamation to it,

and a lot of various emotional words to it.
There isn't one way that being smart has to sound.
It was just wonderful to be reminded of that.
As I was talking about my story I was able to talk about it more enthusiastically than I have ever been able to before.
Why I like teaching and my enthusiasm.
Just the really silly excitement that I have for what I teach about
and how much that lends to how well I teach.
So it was really nice to be reminded of that and to be understood.

Jessica builds on Shawna's comments:

I was just reminded
How people always said that there was this age gap:
we don't have so much in common.
In the pairing I saw so much of myself in Jordan,
in some way and hope that you saw yourself in me too.
You know that there is a kind of interesting mirroring that happens.
That we just have a lot in common.

Amy offers her perspective also focusing on the relational aspect of the exercise:

I really appreciated the structure provided.
I am usually having to keep things on task.
To be in a situation where we have a mixed age group
and we are in a setting where we are kind of enjoying each other
and valuing each other
and doing this kind of exercise that is interesting and some fun parts and all that, it was just great to have the chance to talk,
because even though we have a lot of teens around the house,
they are just talking with each other.
It is nice to have a situation where you get to talk to them in this very open and positive way.
It was just great.
I don't think we have this very often.
I appreciate this opportunity.

Jackie chooses to share her collage by reading the words she has chosen.

I have a lot of words because I am a wordy person. I kind of wrote poetry with it.

> *Happy wanderers,*
> *have the best discovery.*
> *Making it your rock and rap.*
> *Its about people.*
> *Live, glimmering.*

All the bells in your soul.
And just like I have the lighthouse
hangout garden party studio.
The mask identity is everything.
Body
A special business lunch.
The focus
Actions
On just one dollar.
Outrageous make things grow.

Sue talks about what she notices in her performance with Alexis:

What was neat for me was to hear from Alexis about her experience,
of course as a parent I had my own experience around.
To hear her uncover that and the meaning that it had for her.
It was really neat to see that.
Another thing that came forward,
because of the stories that we were telling each other,
What happens during those middle school years,
that can destroy and hopefully only temporarily.
what can happen in those younger age years,
what needs to happen as you come out of that
to kind of bring back that openness of moving into the world.
So I learned a lot today
and I appreciate you being my teacher (to Alexis).

Claire starts out by describing the process she used to make her collage:

I started out putting words everywhere.
Then I went back and put faces everywhere
and just covered the faces with the words that I like.
just random words like peer and performance.

Claire now talks about what stood out for her in her performance with Amy:

More stuff that we had in common.
It was surprising that we agreed on things that we were talking about
like helping programs like UNICEF
and helping people around the world
and stuff like that.

Jordan emphasizes the age differences and the value of having this opportunity to talk with someone older than her.

I thought that it was really cool
that we had a chance to talk to people that are older than us,
that had more experience that us.
usually we don't talk to people that are like, older than us.
You know we talk to our friends but, like, you guys have more experience.
Its really cool because Jennifer has, like, a play that she directed.
It was really cool, like, to hear all these things that she did.
Alexis summarizes her experience:

I learned that I am a lot like my mom.

Sue responds, somewhat surprised:

What did you say?

Alexis repeats what she said, this time with laughter. The group joins in.

I learned that I am a lot like my mom.

Ava shares her concluding remark:

I was just going to say,
like Shawna was saying about enthusiasm and stuff.
It was nice to talk to an adult that can talk that way
and not just like, yeah, "I have to make myself look like a mature adult,
like a good role model" (group laughter).
For me, people that are my role models are not adults, who think,
"Wow this has to happen perfectly"
"I have to get all this done"
"You have to do perfect in school."
That is not the kind of person I look up to.
It was nice to talk to Shawna
because it seems like she's, like, kind of my role model.

The remainder of the group performance centered on favorable comments about the pizza that was shared during the lunch break and a chorus of thank yous and goodbyes.

Act II.

***Introduction*.** The second careering performance involved two participants. I identified two interested and available participants with whom I chose to go ahead and conduct this small careering performance. Although the group size changed, the instructions for the participants and the cross-generational pairing remained consistent. This careering performance was held at a friend's apartment, conveniently located so that

the younger participant could take the bus. To begin the careering session, I provided an introduction to the study and gave participants verbal and written recommendations for how to proceed with their careering performance. I remained outside the apartment so that I was not listening in on the session but was close by so that if the participants were to have any questions they could easily reach me.

Scene I: Katelyn and Lynn. Katelyn is 13 years old, Caucasian, and a middle school student at a Waldorf-oriented private school. Lynn who is Katelyn's partner in this performance is Caucasian, in her mid-40s and is working on her master's degree in psychology at a local university. Katelyn and Lynn meet in the living room of the apartment, which is a cozy, well-lit, and comfortable room. They have not met prior to today's session.

After introducing the study and giving instructions, I leave the room where Katelyn and Lynn are meeting. They both diligently jump right into their performance, conversing back and forth. There is a lively feel to their conversation.

Lynn begins her story in the middle by telling Katelyn that she has previously owned her own business. At this time, Lynn was living in a small town in Montana with her husband and two children. She was her children's primary caregiver while her husband worked fulltime. Lynn shares that her business continued to grow and when her clientele reached 300 she began to forget their names. Katelyn responds, "Wow, three hundred is a lot! I can memorize music. . . ." Lynn and Katelyn discover common ground as they go back and forth talking about music and memorizing. Lynn's beginning is a social one, reflected both in her story she shares about knowing all the names of her 300+ clients and in her interactions now with Katelyn.

Lynn and Katelyn return to the instructions provided for the session, and Lynn begins her story from the beginning.

Gosh, this happened almost 10 years ago.
I was working in a plant nursery.
I worked there a couple seasons.
You know, it's like you work your butt off for someone else
and you get paid something minimal.
It was very unsatisfying.

After Lynn worked for two seasons at the nursery, she "got this idea." She shares with Katelyn that she was a "major gardener" and had become involved in old garden roses. Building on her interest in old garden roses, Lynn decided to start her own business.

Gosh, how do I tell it all?
It was like starting from scratch.
Instead of going to work for someone else,
I decided to start my own business.
I had no idea how to do that.

I had saved money from when I was at the nursery, so that was the money that I put into it.

For Lynn, starting her business involved a significant amount of not knowing and in the face of this, she discovered her first step. Lynn describes the spontaneous beginnings of her business.

I had gone down to Arizona to go on a retreat.
On my way home I stopped off at a roadside nursery,
and bought like 150 to 200 roses plants.
I brought them home and, again,
I didn't really know what I was going to be doing.
I potted them up,
and then took them to the farmers' market on Saturday.
I made up a flyer.

As Lynn began to develop her business, she found that she did not have "any idea" how to proceed. She discovered a roadside nursery when she was traveling and purchased 150-200 rose plants. This was her beginning. When Lynn potted her roses and took them to the local farmers' market to sell she realized that "people in Montana didn't know anything about growing these little roses." It is easy to imagine Lynn talking with the Montana locals at the farmers' market, sharing what she knew about her roses. By doing this, she discovered an unexpected part of her business.

I had to educate them.
I sold roses for about five years.
It was educating the community.
I started to create a display garden in my yard.
I wanted to have these roses in an actual garden so people could see how they are being used.

Lynn's focus for her business very quickly involved educating people in the community about how to grow the roses she was selling. Her social interactions became central to her work. Lynn also discovered that she is "creative." She had not recognized this before, because she had found herself unsuccessful at creating traditional art.

I did love to design in the garden
and I loved talking about roses.
I loved sharing.
I became very passionate about it.
I just sucked up any knowledge I could.
I started traveling around to other grow shows to learn more.
It just became my whole life.

The combination of sharing what she knew about the roses and helping people design their gardens became a tremendously rich endeavor for Lynn. She now talks about some of the practical details.

L. I didn't make any money at it (laughter).
K. "You sold them, right?"
Right.
But selling them only paid to run the rose garden.
I made a little bit.
It certainly was not enough to live on.

Lynn takes a personal turn and shares with Katelyn that she was going through a divorce during that time and became more concerned about being able to maintain her home and support her children. Lynn recognized, given her situation that "the roses weren't going to support" her and her children. She made the decision that she was going to stop selling the roses, although she maintains a feeling that she will "go back to them" sometime in the future.

I can't imagine learning so much about them
and enjoying them so much
and enjoying the people that I met.

Lynn speaks again about the relationships she developed with customers while running her business, but this time she talks about leaving her business behind. Lynn speaks strongly and relationally about this, as if she had ended an intimate relationship.

Lynn proceeds to draw connections between her rose business and her current ambitions in the field of psychology.

What is interesting is,
I am now in psychology.
I am a graduate student in psychology getting my master's.
Hmmm.
Back then I hadn't done any kind of schooling.
I had met some therapist or something and
she asked me, "What is it that you really like about them [the roses]?"
And I thought, "What is it?"
I thought, "Oh! It puts me in contact with people so I can talk to people about the things that really matter."
Now that I am in psychology,
I think that really fits.

As Lynn recalls a previous conversation she had with a therapist about selling her roses, she is able to understand what was most meaningful to her about this experience. This conversation also helped Lynn discover a direction for herself based on what matters. Lynn now starts to imagine ways she might bring all her interests together.

I would like to somehow reach people through gardening.
Something like that.
I am not really sure.
I am just starting out.
I have no idea where my career is going.
I haven't been out in the working world for long because I was a stay-at-home mom.

Lynn begins to formulate some ideas about her future that involves carrying forward her love of gardening into her current studies of psychology. She also expresses uncertainty about her career direction. Having been a stay-at-home mom, Lynn sees herself as "just starting out." Lynn proceeds to reflect on the multiple reasons that she did not continue with her rose business while also naming several more skills she gained and the excitement that came from this venture. Creating her own informative flyers, growing her mailing list, and creating an informational website are all skills that Lynn gained out of her "love" for talking about the roses and also her "love" of communicating her knowledge through writing.

When Katelyn asks Lynn about the essential elements that made it possible for her to create her business, Lynn reflects on her early imaginings, which were sparked by realizing that she was "wasting" her "talents."

There was just something that I wanted that was bigger.
I can definitely work with others and
I also knew that I could start something.
Just imagining, I think, was kind of essential.
I am also extremely curious.
I wanted to learn more and more.
I mean it was just endless.

Lynn shares that now she does not find herself as motivated to learn in her master's program. Katelyn suggests to Lynn, "You have more passion about the roses obviously." Lynn fills out the picture about how she often feels "overloaded" in school. Lynn continues to reflect on her rose business, focusing now on the social elements.

I love the people.
Maybe that is another element,
my people skills and being very social.
I can talk to people real easily.
Being really passionate drew people in.
I was into having people talk about what it was they wanted.
I would rather have their gardens be an expression of them,
so I would really tend to draw people out.
I got to know people really, really well.

As Katelyn mirrors for Lynn what she has heard, together they enter into a spontaneous exchange, creating understandings.

K: So you liked teaching . . .
L: Yes, very much so.
K: You should be a teacher too.
L: No, because being a teacher is too . . .
K: Too strict?
L: A structured environment that is too…
K: Yah, rules.
L: Yah, too many rules.

Lynn shares again about her divorce but now talks about the importance of having work that allowed her to continue to be involved in her kids' lives. Lynn shows Katelyn another reason why having flexibility in her work was so important.

I was very much an available mom.
That is what was important to me as a mother
so this business actually allowed for that.
I could fit it around my kids and their activities.
I was also home.

Lynn shares in more detail how she decided to go back to school and what she was up against.

I needed to get that education I had been putting off.
I was feeling that maybe I was limited in some way.
The rose business was all about throwing off all my hackles
that I had put on myself,
and just balls to the walls!
I just wanted so much more,
so I thought maybe I need to go to school.

As Lynn imagines how she might use her qualities as a resource in the working world, Katelyn joins in:

L: There was a part of me that knew
I didn't just fit into a corporation.
K: You wanted to be more independent.
You wanted to make your own rules. (laughter)
L: My rules were to be less restricted and more creative!

Lynn reviews what she has learned, what some of her strengths are, and also acknowledges how "fearful" she was at times creating her business. She also shares a story about a party she had when she received her undergraduate degree, remembering all

the people who had helped her get through school and this challenging time in her life. It is as if Lynn gathers support now through her story by remembering the people that supported her in the past as she tries to imagine her next step.

It makes me wonder again, when you look back, like with you and your music.
All the little pieces that you really enjoy.
You put more years on yourself and
it becomes more and more things.
How do all those little things fit into the bigger picture?
To me it is like a puzzle.
I have no idea what the bigger picture looks like.

Lynn's careering process is akin to a puzzle that has not yet been completed.

She takes a moment to recognize the value of her relationships in her career discovery process.

I like sitting around and talking to other people…
Talking about what our next moves will be
and really dreaming.

Lynn leaves her performance open-ended. She is uncertain what her next step might be, although she describes a process of wondering which she prefers to do with "other people." Could that be her next step? Lynn encourages Katelyn to begin by expressing an interest in knowing more about her. Katelyn begins:

I don't know what I should use
I don't know which story, because I want to be so many things.
This isn't like for one thing that you are for sure going to do.
This is for ideas, right?

Lynn responds right away:

There are very few of us in life that know . . .
Most of us just have a sense.
I am curious about all the things.
Like name some of the things.

Katelyn unfurls her rich and diverse list of interests, pondering her possible working selves. As she does this, Lynn asks her many questions and joins in Katelyn's exploration.

K: I want to be a marine biologist.
I love dolphins.
L: My daughter too! Her whole apartment is dolphins.
K: I want to be an author.

I like writing. I am writing a story with my friend.
I want to be a musician
and a linguist.
Those at the same time.
L: What is a linguist?

Katelyn describes the way that language is "built off of a tree" and decides she would also like to combine music, language, and religion. Katelyn includes two more possibilities for her future: a chef and an airplane pilot for a 737 jetliner. When Lynn asks her why a pilot for a 737, Katelyn responds:

I think it would be fun to be one
because I think it is always exciting when you have a women pilot.
You go, Yeah!
L: I don't think I have ever known that I have had a women pilot.
K: Yeah, that is why I want to be a pilot.

Lynn wants to know what kind of instrument Katelyn plays. Katelyn has been playing the cello for 3 years. Lynn also is interested to know more about Katelyn's family, and their conversation takes on a personal note. Katelyn tells Lynn that she lives with her mom and has a half-brother who is 21. She also shares that her dad passed away when she was 4 years old. Katelyn talks excitedly about her relationship with her brother and how important he is to her. Through Katelyn's conversation with Lynn, she discovers a story that is relevant to her careering process.

Katelyn had decided that she wanted to go visit her brother and his wife who live in Canada. When she approached her mom about this, she suggested that Katelyn raise the money herself so that she could go on the trip. Katelyn likes the idea of going by herself:

I really like being independent.

Katelyn referred to raising the money for her trip:

I just started hanging up signs.
I would have a babysitting job from 9:30-12:30.
I would have lunch, and then 1-5:30, I would do another job.
I was working really hard.
I was pretty disciplined.
I was really disciplined on not spending money.
I knew it would be worth it.
I just really wanted to go see him.

Katelyn found it "amazing" that she was able to raise as much money as she did over her summer break. Lynn clarifies:

So you realized your goal.
You have already paid for your ticket?
K: Yeah!
L: Man, that is discipline.

Lynn returns to the instructions, and together, Lynn and Katelyn reflect on the "five essential elements that made this possible." What were the qualities that Katelyn invoked to reach and achieve this important goal? Katelyn begins:

Probably determination.
Probably self discipline around not spending money.
Umm. Organization, which I am not very good at.
I made a calendar of things I had to do.
I actually forgot a couple jobs (laughter).
L: (laughter) And this was your first time really doing all this! My gosh!
K: Responsibility.
L: Uh huh . . .
K: lack of sleep (laughter).
L: Lack of sleep reminds me of not spending money.
Putting your priorities in line.

Katelyn tells Lynn that she is leaving in three days for her trip to Canada. She shares that she is "excited" and also a "little nervous" about the plane crashing or being hijacked. Lynn brings the conversation back to Katelyn's accomplishment.

L: So you had your goal.
And it was here, the three hundred,
and you have gone way beyond that
and you have extra cash!!!!
Plus you were able to experience what it was like to do without
And it wasn't that bad!!!
K: Yeah. But it was fun too!
L: That must be a great sense of accomplishment too.
K: Yeah!
L: To know you have done this yourself.
K: I think I will appreciate the trip more.

Lynn and Katelyn continue to build on Katelyn's accomplishments by recognizing that she learned that "money doesn't grow on trees" and that she was able to do this "without any allowance." Katelyn recalls how she earned her last $32 when she played her cello for a community dinner where she lives. Lynn responds:

Wow. That is great!
K: I know!
L: And doing something that you really enjoy!

K: Ya. It was really fun.
Plus some people didn't even know I played the cello.

Katelyn and Lynn ponder together both of their next small steps as they draw on the qualities they have highlighted today in their performance.

K: I don't know what it will do to support me . . .
Well, I guess to prioritize.
Really prioritize.
L: I guess for me I keep seeing the resource as,
we have to trust ourselves.
When we want something
we have to go out and get it,
to make it happen.

Katelyn and Lynn continue to play with their possible future working selves. As they get toward the end of their performance Katelyn and Lynn come upon a metaphor that resonates for both of them.

K: Airports can be really exciting:
like all the possibilities.
L: You mean all the different places you could go.
Yeah, it's fun.
Life should be like that for me.
It should always be an adventure.
K: Like an airport.
Life should be like an airport!
L: Yeah! Life should be like that:
always a new destination.

While concluding their performance, Katelyn again utters, "I don't know what I want to do for sure at all." Lynn responds by emphasizing the adventurous side of discovering one's career.

It is fun to open your self up to it though.
What is interesting is how it comes to you.

Lynn talks briefly about her love of travel, and then Katelyn and Lynn revisit their airport metaphor.

L: When you get to the airport and everyone is looking at the monitors.
Seeing what you are suppose to be doing.
Everyone seems to know where they are going except you.
And it's not true.
Nobody really knows where they are going.

K: I like that feeling where you are kind of insecure
but you have to make a decision fast.
I like that.
When I am downtown, you know, like by myself
Or with my friends
And you don't really know where you are supposed to be.
They said meet here but I don't really see it.
I just walk this way.
It's fun.
L: I think you have a lot of trust in yourself that you can do that.
K: Yeah, you have to trust yourself.

Group reflections. As I join Katelyn and Lynn in the concluding performance, they both talk about their uncertainty about what they were suppose to be doing and if what they came up with had any importance.

K: It was hard to know what you expected.
L: It is hard to know if you hit on anything.
K: I don't know if I said anything important.

I offer an affirming response, emphasizing my interest in exploring the topic of career through their stories. I then invite Katelyn and Lynn to share a little bit about what they discovered.

Lynn begins by talking about her life having "ended up like a big puzzle" and she does not have all the pieces. Lynn also shares that she "knows" that there is something in her experience of selling roses that is still relevant for her now, because that experience contains so much meaning for her. By returning to the concept of careering that I shared in the introduction, I suggest to Lynn that what she is describing fits well with my understanding of how careers frequently unfold for people. I also now know that Lynn was affirming this for Katelyn earlier when she was struggling with not knowing exactly what she wants to do for work when she gets older. Both Katelyn and Lynn are careering as they engage relationally through their stories creating rich metaphorical descriptions.

Katelyn talks about her performance by sharing a summary of her story. As she is doing this Lynn and I are both interested and engaged. When Katelyn finishes her story she concludes:

Yeah! I am better than I thought I was.

A lively conversation ensues between the three of us about confidence and the difference it makes when one is trying to perform well. Katelyn is very aware that she plays her cello the best when she is confident because then she does not get nervous. She also talks about how she plays basketball better when "someone is really supportive and nice." Lynn describes this as a "supportive space." Katelyn builds on this:

And when you are confident you are happy!

L: . . . and you are creative and you express yourself more readily.

Lynn follows this by reflecting on the ways that she has "limited" herself in her life and said that as she started to move more into the world, she became more aware of those places when she would experience fear. Lynn concludes the performance on an up note:

Keep dreaming and shooting big and just wondering.

Katelyn's final act is a scene where someone has entered into her space creating a restriction:

Hey! Get out of my bubble!

Both Katelyn and Lynn conclude their performances confidently. Lynn is "shooting big," and Katelyn is clearing out space for herself.

Act III.

***Introduction*.** The third careering performance involved four participants, one of which was me, and took place in the living room of my home. This provided a private space to meet and separate meeting spaces for the dyad careering performances. The group initially convened around the dining room table, which created a relaxed feel to begin our careering performance. We started with a casual conversation about career and what sorts of thoughts the participants had about their perceptions of career and the role it is or will play in their lives. This conversation served as a warm up to our dyad performances, and the thoughts that emerged in this conversation reemerged in the dyad performances. Following the warm up, I provided an overview of the study, with written and verbal recommendations to guide their careering performances.

***Scene I: Molly and Johnna*.** Molly suggests that Johnna go first. Johnna agrees and then asks to take a minute to review the instructions. Johnna begins:

I am nervous.

Johnna is Caucasian and is 43. After many years of management experience in the corporate world, Johnna chose to go back to school. She is currently working on her master's in psychology at a local Buddhist-inspired university. Molly is Caucasian, 17-years-old and a senior in high school. She is preparing for going to college in South Africa. In the warm-up session, both Molly and Johnna described experiences of unexplainable moments as they find their way in the world. As Molly reflects on why she wants to go to South Africa, she shares:

Something came into my head and said, "You need to go and be there."

Johnna describes her decision to leave her job in the corporate world:

Something was saying, "Leave."

Neither Johnna nor Molly is able to say exactly why they made certain decisions about their careers and school.

Johnna begins her performance with yearning for her working life:

I am all nostalgic for my work because I have been in graduate school for a year and a half.
I am ahhhh.
I would like to have a job.

She proceeds to share her story of the last job that she had unexpectedly stayed in for 6 years. She has entered into a company to direct a call center that was in far worse shape than she even expected, but with excitement, she shares, "I love a challenge." She feels that she does her best in the face of a challenge, especially when everyone else "says that it can't be done." The call center had not had a manager for quite some time, and it was a "pretty crazy scene."

Johnna says she first set out in her job to

. . . get to know the people that were on the management team.
I started to get a flavor of whom I had on the team.
I listened to what they thought about how things were going.

Johnna established important relationships within her company. These relationships were instrumental in helping her know how to proceed.

Johnna also reveals to Molly different aspects of what it was like for her to begin this job.

I was scared.
"Oh my god. How am I going to do this?
This place is out of control!"
It was also really fun.
I really enjoy relating to people.
I got to do that quite a lot.

As Johnna describes her experience starting this job, it is easy to imagine her on a roller coaster ride, holding on for dear life and yet being thrilled about the excitement and challenge. As Johnna presents the various elements of her narrative, Molly is present on stage in the role of listening and is an important part of this performance. Without Molly Johnna would not be telling her story.

Johnna proceeds to talk about some of the challenges she faced with her boss:

He was a really difficult boss.
Sexist, white guy, powerful . . .

that kind of thing.
I figured out how to work with him.
I got his confidence.
He started giving me a lot of leeway.
I started calling him on things.
Really bold.
I was really quite surprised with myself.
I would wonder, "Where did that come from?"

Johnna surprises herself. While interacting with her boss, she is "really bold" and sometimes she takes the lead.

Johnna returns to discussing her other working relationships:

I get a lot of satisfaction from working with large groups of people.
When something needs to happen
I can facilitate that by listening to what people are saying,
being able to take in a lot of information
and present it to the right people,
and get the right resources.
We started to get a lot of support from the company.

Johnna was overseeing a customer experience department for a transportation company. This department had been minimized and required significant rebuilding. When Johnna arrived at the company, she could tell that "people were hopeful" that things could change for the better. Johnna expands on how she was able to do this:

They kept saying, "It's great what you are doing,
but you won't stay at this company."
There was a sense of responsibility that felt good to me.
I could make something happen.

Johnna highlights her sense of responsibly to the people she worked with. Her responsibility emerged within her work relationships as, together, they began to set a new direction for this department.

Working with people that were disenchanted.
Really carefully sharing with them what I wanted to do.
Seeing what they thought.
Being sure to gather their input.
I would say, "We are all here today.
We know it is pretty crappy.
We would like to go over there.
These are some steps that could take us there."
A high point was watching other people
start to pick up pieces of the business.

It was rewarding.

Johnna checks to see if Molly has any questions. Molly first is not sure, and then she asks:

Was there a driving factor that made you stay for so long,
or did it just happen?
J: *That is a great question.*
I think my investment in the people
is definitely what made me stay.

Johnna also shares that she received her master's degree in human development during that time and her employer paid the tuition. Another benefit of Johnna's job is she was able to develop a significant amount of autonomy, which allowed her to have flexibility in her schedule. Johnna returns to the positive changes that occurred with her employees.

I really enjoyed the management team.
People grew in that department.
They grew into higher levels of responsibility.
That fed me a lot to just see the personal growth
of the people that I was working with.

Molly responds affirmatively:

That's cool.

Johnna ponders, "What is it about me that made this possible?"

I think I found out about myself in that environment
from the feedback that I got from people.
What I got from my experience was that
I really have an ability to create a vision
that comes from the ways that I seek input.
So, create a vision, and then create movement behind it.
Get people involved.
Then stepping back from it
and watching other people take it forward.
Being respectful of people.
Having their best interest at heart.

Johnna describes creating a vision as a process that comes *from* her working relationships. Johnna learns about her leadership capacity at work through positive feedback from her colleagues, boss, and employees. She also in turn offered the same growth opportunities for her employees. Although Johnna's use of language implies that

it is *her* that was doing this *with* others she also takes it a step further by saying that her ability to create a viable working vision "comes from" the way that she seeks input.

Let's take a step further into the social nature of Johnna's work by imagining Johnna and her management team dancing together on stage as they create significant and powerful changes. It is difficult to determine with whom one action begins or where it might end. Johnna, her management team, and even her boss are all involved in a dynamic social dance while creating development and growth at work.

When Molly asks Johnna how she might bring some of these qualities into her life, now Johnna mentions that she wants to start her own business.

I am totally afraid to do it.
All summer I have wanted to create a business.
Create a flyer for professional coaching.
I couldn't do it . . .

Johnna ponders why it is so much harder for her to create her own business, when she doesn't have a "whole work community of people."

That is quite stumbling for me.
It makes me question,
"Is that going to be the right thing for me?"
"Is that going to feed me?"
I don't know.

Molly jumps in to guide the process:

I think that leads perfectly into the next question (laughter)!
B: *You are such a good facilitator.*
What is the next question?
M: *Imagine a next small step . . .*
B: *The first word in the question is "imagine."*
I think the fear I have
is what keeps me from really blowing the whole picture up.

Johnna talks about a brochure she saw for coaching teens and she recognizes that she could do that. She returns again to not being certain about what type of business she wants to create.

I think the small step is to allow myself to imagine it.
When I write papers for school I build them.
I call this sketching them out.
Do that as my next step.

Molly clarifies:

So, do that kind of diagram for your business?
B: Yes. So what do they call it?
Building a skeleton.
M: Awesome! That is great.
B: Wow. Yeah.
Great questions.
M: So is it me? It is me!

Molly begins her performance by setting the stage for Johnna. Molly tells Johnna that she has played Zimbabwean music for almost 4 years and recently she went to a Zimbabwean music festival that she performed at with one of her bands, (she plays in two bands). Molly explains the different stages at which the bands perform. At the day stage, people come by to watch in between their classes, whereas the night stage is for the big concert after dinner. Molly talks about a friendly competition that her band has with a youth ensemble from another region.

I found out when this festival was getting closer,
that my band was going to play on the day stage.
Their band was going to play on the night stage!
I got fired up!
I wanted to be on the big stage!!!

Molly responds to the friendly competition.

Somehow I managed to play on the main stage every night!
I got in with other bands,
and my other band did play on the big stage the last night.
I was on the big stage every night.

Johnna joins in Molly's excitement:

Wow!
M: It was such a big deal.
I said to myself that I wanted to be on that stage,
and I did it.

Johnna describes an image that comes to mind as she listens to Molly tell her story: Molly is clicking her heels and stardust is flying. Next, Johnna encourages Molly to fill out the picture:

You had to be more involved in how you made this happen
than just dreaming your way into it.
What were those things?

Molly reflects on the essential qualities. One is that she learned to play one of the percussion instruments called the *hosho*.

I earned a name for myself being able to play it.
Our rival band asked me to play with them on every single song.
That was really exciting.

Molly recognizes the social element which was important to her success of realizing her dream to play on the big stage.

I don't know . . .
Musicianship is part of it.
Being good at what I do.
A lot if it is the social aspect.
Like putting yourself out there
and saying, "I am good enough
and you need to have me playing with you!"
That totally freaks me out.

Molly stands center stage and announces her greatness. She then ducks behind the curtain realizing the risk she just took. Johnna continues to ask questions with curiosity about Molly's relationship with the rival band. Molly describes this band as her "friends." Molly also shares that other bands that she did not know until this music festival had invited her to join in on their performances. She believes that she was invited because they had been able to see her play a few nights prior on the big stage.

Molly reflects further on how she was part of creating these performances:

It is stage performance and presence.
Being really confident on stage.
It is NOT about actually saying that I am good enough
and you need to have me play.
It's about showing people
that I am good enough to do this.
"You want me to play with your band, don't you!"

For Molly, her performance of success is performative. She determines that it works best to show people what you can do in order to open doors. Johnna responds with laughter:

Right!!!
Because you can't always say it.
You kind of have to be it.
M: *Yeah, that was a big part of it!*

Johnna asks Molly about what essential qualities she has that helped make this happen. Molly suggests that they have already covered this but she expands on what she came up with by remembering a conversation that she had with the directors of her band about what she had contributed over the past 6 months.

The biggest thing that we came up with was my enthusiasm.
Making sure no one took themselves too seriously.
Being 17 and just having fun with it.
More than being really professional.

Johnna returns to recognizing the way that Molly was able to use her social network at music camp prior to the music festival and how that worked out well for her.

You didn't just go there.
You made friends there
and you networked with them when you saw them again.
There was a whole sequence that happened from that.

M: *And the other people involved.*
I definitely could not have done it without the entire community.
The biggest thing would be my directors.
They totally push me all the time.
I feel like I am giving a speech.
They really do . . .
They encourage me
And give me opportunities.
Other people that give me those opportunities are so helpful:
absolutely essential.

J: *That is great.*

Molly ponders how she might use what she has learned as a resource in her life now.

I guess to take a step back
and be able to say,
"Wow! I can really do this!"
I have an idea that I am shy
and I am really not sure that I am shy.
My excuse is "No, I am shy. I can't do that."

Molly describes how when she first arrived at the festival, she was shy when she thought about how everyone there was "really good" and had been playing so much longer than she had. Molly returns to her strengths.

Knowing that I do have something to offer.
Being able to put myself out there.

Just using that memory as a resource to draw from.

Johnna affirms the way that Molly took a beginning risk to go to the music camp prior to the music festival as a way to stretch herself. Molly then thinks about how it is hard to do things by oneself without a community. She refers to Johnna's performance earlier, when Johnna also revealed that she found that difficult. Molly is aware that she is "thriving" now in her life but wonders what will happen when she goes to South Africa by herself.

What am I going to do?
Am I going to curl up and be shy?
Or am I just going to explode?
That is interesting for me to think about.

When Johnna asks Molly about her plans for her trip, Molly shares that she is planning to first go to Zimbabwe and then work her way down to South Africa where she wants to go to school.

I am not really sure what the music scene is like at the college.
I actually know that there is a music community
for my style of music.
I don't know how big it is or
who is involved in it.
I am just blindly jumping into South Africa!
J: That sounds like a line from a poem.
M: Jumping into Africa! Yeah!

Johnna asks Molly to imagine a next small step she will take to bring more of the qualities she has named into her life now. Molly responds:

This is funny
because the one that stands out is small.
I can just think about
what I can comfortably do
that will get me to my goal.
I am not really sure.

Johnna talks about how she has been able to complete her college applications and has a plan. Johnna responds:

Nice job.
M: So I need another step.
J: That sounds like a big step.
M: It was a big step.
It seems like when I did, it wasn't such a big deal,

but I did it!

Johnna revisits the part of Molly's story where she first participates in a music camp and then goes to a large music festival, and how she built on each step of "knowing people and then knowing more people."

I am wondering about the small step
of checking out the music scene a little bit.

Johnna agrees that that is a good idea, and she identifies two people that could help her with that. One is a professor at the school, and Molly knows that he is a "really, really good resource."

It would be really good to get in touch with him.
That is awesome.
That is so helpful!
J: You can step into Africa.
M: It doesn't have to be, "Where am I going?"
J: It sounds like what has worked for you before
has been networking with people.
M: Yes. Thank you!

Scene II: Julia and Lisa. Julia begins her performance by telling Lisa that she recently found out that she is not going to be able to continue playing basketball for the high school she is now attending. Julia is 16 years old, Latina, and a sophomore at one of the local high schools. (I am the other participant in this dyad and refer to myself here by name rather than in first person.) Lisa is 47, Caucasian, and has been practicing as a psychotherapist for 19 years. Julia and Lisa know each other because Lisa's daughter was on the same basketball team with Julia when they were both in middle school.

Julia's performance is about her experience as a basketball player entering into high school. She starts by first talking about her basketball experience during middle school:

The YMCA [basketball] program was a bigger thing for me.
I learned more than I did at my school.
I became a better player.
I got to meet more people.

Julia proceeds to talk about the basketball training camp she attended over the summer prior to entering high school:

I didn't know anybody there.
There were like 50 girls there.
L: Wow.
J: I was all by myself.

Julia reveals how she was able to take the necessary steps to participate in the basketball training camp:

That was a big step for me.
Actually doing something like that.
I was like, "I am not doing it!"
Then my teachers and the principle were like,
"You should do it!"
"Okay, I am doing it!"
So then I went . . .

Julia shares that she ended up spraining her ankle during this training, and she was not able to complete the camp. She said that when she tried out for the team, she faced the additional challenge of not being familiar with all the plays.

That was pretty weird actually.
That was when they learned all the plays.
When tryouts came I was like, "Oh, gosh."
"I don't know what this play is."
"Help me please."
They were just like,
"Go with it."
I was really nervous.
I didn't want to go.

Julia was able to reach out to her team members, but she talks about her fears about how her team members would perceive her. She was concerned:

These people are going to make fun of me.

Most of the kids on the team had previously played on a private league that Julia considers much better than the team that she was on prior to high school. She continues to share some of her uncertainty about how she was going to fit in on this team.

They are better than me.
What are they going to think of me?
What if I am not that good?
What if they kick me off the team?
I was just so worried . . . crazy.
Julia shares that after a couple of months on the team she turned a corner:
I started to feel a little more confident.
I knew more of the girls on the team.
I got to talk to my coaches about things.
That was a big step.

Feeling very confident about what I was doing.
Making new friends.

From Julia's story it is evident that her entrance onto the basketball team involved a number of important relationships beginning with her teacher and principal. When she began playing on the team, Julia shares that she experienced significant distress. She imagined a negative response from her team members. Soon Julia began to feel more confident as she got to know her coaches and teammates.

Lisa returns to Julia's starting point, and together they explore what made this possible for Julia:

L. So, just being willing to walk into that room
and not knowing a single person . . .
J: Just starting brand new.
It was hard but I did it!
L: You could have come up with a reason not to.
J: I could have just quite all together,
But I didn't.
L: Good for you.
That is a big thing, isn't it?
J: That was a big thing.

Lisa asks Julia how she was able to get herself to walk into the basketball training camp. Julia responds,

First thing was . . .
Well, I am Hispanic.
I am a minority.
I went to that camp.
I looked around.
I was the only minority there.
I didn't know a lot of people there.
I didn't see any of my friends there.
That is what really scared me.
What are my Mexican friends going to think of me?

Julia invites her former self on stage as she describes walking into camp for the first time. She does not see any one else in the room like herself nor does she see any of her friends. Julia describes her experience of being in the minority at this moment. Julia then shares confidently that she "just got over that." Lisa asks Julia about what she was imagining her Mexican friends would think about her joining the basketball team. Julia says,

They are going to think,
I am such a loser,

doing a sport
and if I don't hang out with them anymore.

Lisa affirms that Julia was faced with taking the step of joining the team without knowing how her friends would react. Julia returns to the fact that things did work out for her in the end:

I got over it,
and they accepted it.
Now it is fine.
I guess I worried over nothing.

Lisa shares that it seems "understandable" to have had some concerns especially because Julia did not have any of her friends or "Mexican" kids on the team. Julie goes more into how she dealt with this experience:

I really couldn't be myself.
Like how I acted . . .
Other people would go, "She is so weird."
I kind of had to hide myself in this big crowd.
That was the hard part.

Hearing about Julia's need to hide herself in order for things to work out makes it even more significant that she was able to become confident and connected to her team.

Julia returns to the beginning of her story which is that she "can't play anymore" because she is having problems with her ankles. Her physical therapist told her just the previous week that it would be better if she did not continue to play basketball because of her structural issues. Julia's problems with her ankles have also been causing her increased knee and hip pain. Julie talks about the loss she is experiencing as she considers not playing basketball:

I figured out that I wasn't going to be able to play.
Wow.
L: *That is a big thing.*
J: *It has helped me so much to come out*
and become more confident.
L: *You seem like a natural player.*
I always loved watching you play.
J: *It is so nerve-wracking before a game . . .*
butterflies and sweaty palms.
The rush.
It was just great.
L: *All the excitement and everyone cheering.*
J: *Yeah!*

As Julia considers what it will mean to her to not play basketball, she takes a few moments to replay her past experience. While she does this, it is easy to imagine Julia playing basketball. The noise of the fans and the feeling of excitement come into the room. Julia considers one of the advantages that will come from this unexpected change.

I think I can get through,
because I will have more time to do homework,
focus on school
and get better grades.
L: Is that important to you?
J: That is very important to me.
Going back to the college thing.
I just want to get into college and graduate.
My grades are not as good as I want them to be.
L: You imagine you can do better . . .
J: Yeah. I have been slacking off.

Lisa asks Julia to describe what it was that made it possible for her to walk into the camp that day and also to continue to stay engaged in basketball.

J: Just being open to new ideas.
Having this drive . . .
L: Being open . . . being driven . . .
J: I think communication.
I wouldn't have gone
if I wouldn't have talked to my teachers.
My math teacher knew the head coach.
He actually got me in for free,
because I didn't have the money.
I wouldn't have said, "Help me get into this."
It wouldn't have happened.
L: You took the risk of actually talking to him . . .
J: My principle was bugging me.
She kept saying, "Are you going to play?"
I was like, "Yeah. I'll play."

Then I talked to my math teacher.
It turned out pretty good.

Lisa helps Julia summarize what she has shared so far:

L. Being willing to communicate.
Being willing to talk to people.
It sounds like you knew your principle.
You made your connections

and people knew you.
You weren't hiding out.
How did you do this?

J: *I was just myself.*
I made friends with a whole bunch of people.
They were easy and wild.
"I want to do that"
"I just want to be wild, so . . ."

L: *It helped to be around people that are like that.*

J: *Yeah.*

Julia talks about being the most social person in her family. She feels like she is "the opposite" of her parents because they like to be "quiet and watch TV." Julia says she responds to the quietness of her family with, "I got to go!" Lisa asks Julia how communicating, being driven, and being able to develop friendships might be useful to her in her life now and, in the future, for her work.

J: *I think what is going to help the most*
is communication.
You know . . . job interviews.
If you are shy, your boss isn't going to like that.
They won't be very impressed.
I think communication is a big one.

Lisa asks Julia if she thinks that the experience she described earlier about being "a minority" will influence what she decides to do for work. Julia responds by saying that she "rarely ever thinks about that." Her words say what matters most to her:

When I go home,
I kind of start thinking,
that we live in a tin can.
I just want to get good grades,
make money
and get my family out of this dump.

L: *You want to have a home . . .*

J: *Yeah! Where I can have parties*
and have people over for dinner.
It's hard to do that in a mobile home.
That is what I really think about.
I know my parents try really, really hard
to give us what we want
and give us what we need.
I just want to take it further.

L: *You want to be in a situation where you can have a home,*
have parties, have people over, have meals . . .

J: . . . and actually have degrees posted on the wall,
and pictures of foreign countries,
and a picture of a pyramid.

As Julia speaks about her dreams it is easy to imagine her friends and family joining her on stage. The smell of good food cooking and the sounds of conversations are all part of this scene. Julia's degrees and pictures of foreign countries are displayed prominently.

Julia shares that there is a class trip to Italy in the spring that she would love to go on but she does not have the money. She has started saving instead so that she can go on her own trip with a friend of hers when she graduates from high school.

Julia shares with Lisa what she is currently picturing and excited about for her future career:

I want to be an accountant.
L: That's a great idea.
J: I go to an investment club.
L: So you want to learn about money . . .
J: Yeah. I love working with money.
Anything that has to do with numbers.
Numbers just fascinate me.
L: That is really great.

Julia speaks about "working with money" and "anything that has to do with numbers." Lisa asks Julia about a small step that Julia might take to engage more of her resources, which were discussed earlier. Julia immediately talks about a class she wants to take through the tech center in the school district on banking and accounting services. She also sees this as a step that will then help her get an internship. Julia also shares that she wants to do this at the same time that her brother is going to take automotive courses on the same campus.

Lisa ponders with Julia the ways her life might be different now, because she is not going to play basketball. This is a quieter venture, yet also exciting, but in a different way.

L: It sounds like with basketball,
you can take that energy and focus, like you said,
on school . . .
J: I guess this whole situation is a blessing in disguise.
I can raise my grades up.
I am shooting for a 4.0.
I am working really hard.
L: And the investing club sounds interesting.
J: It is fun.
We actually get to use our own money.
It is going to be exciting!

Julia is able to imagine her life without basketball by spotlighting a different performance that also provides excitement and success. On this note, Lisa steps into her performance as she focuses on what she is learning by pursuing her doctoral degree:

I have done a lot of things in my life.
I work now as a psychotherapist.
That I love.
I am good at it.
I also relate to what Johnna shared . . .
I feel good about what I have done.
I feel successful.
But there is still something else
that I am wanting to do.
I decided to get my Ph.D.
That has been a big thing to take on,
to pursue,
and say, "Okay, I am going to do this."

Lisa describes some of the challenges that she has faced in learning to become a stronger writer and being able to "sit down and focus." She also shares that she "loves doing it" but that for "whatever reason it is riskier." Lisa thinks back to the beginning of her story, which is:

For a long time I have imagined
I would get my Ph.D.
It was difficult to know what I would do it in.
I didn't want to specialize too much.
I am now able to bring in my different interests.
I wanted to include what inspires me.

Lisa paints a picture of some of the elements of her life*:*

It is definitely about living out a dream.
Doing it at a time when it is a big step.
I have a lot on my plate.
I see a lot of clients.

Lisa has also mentioned earlier in the group warm-up that "she struggles around being a mom" and spoke about her desire to invest time in her work and studies, because all of it is so important. She returns to the thread of her studies and what is right about it.

There is something about
sticking with it that feels good.

Lisa reflects on what has made this possible.

I would say determination.
Having support from my parents.

There is something about that
which helps me move forward.

Lisa shares with Julia what she sees are the qualities that make it possible to take on the challenge of her studies:

I think I am creative.
I have a lot of ideas about things.

Lisa hesitates for a moment and notes that it is "hard" to say good things about herself. She then jumps back in determinedly:

I have always been that way.
I have always been curious.
Asking lots of questions.

Lisa references the large group warm-up conversation:

I keep realizing that, like when we were talking earlier.
When something makes you nervous
It is actually okay.
It's a good thing.
Really valuing this.
Not letting that stop me.

Lisa describes being on track in life as involving a type of confidence that allows for being nervous.

Lisa returns to talking about her current age:

I think there is something about how I view my age.
Some people think that you reach a certain age
And your life is done.
I don't feel that way at all.
I think it is good to recreate your life.

Lisa and Julia reflect on how Lisa can use what she has identified in her story as a resource in her current life.

L. The important thing for me
is to keep taking lots of risks.

Not letting my fear stop me.

J: *That is a big one.*

L: *I don't want to say, "I was too scared"*
I want to put my ideas out there more.
Do more writing.

Julia wants to know how Lisa found out about the doctoral program that she is in. Lisa shares that she heard about it through a friend and that she was previously familiar with one of the professors in the program. She had read one of his books several years ago and "really like[d] his thinking." Julia explores with Lisa how she knew she wanted to go in this particular direction.

Did you know a long time ago
that you would be doing this sort of thing?

L: *This research?*

J: *No, psychology stuff.*
Did you know when you were younger?

L: *Yeah. When I was 10 my mom, at that time, was a nurse,*
and she worked at a psychiatric hospital.
She would tell a lot of stories.
I also had a school counselor that I liked.
When I was young I thought I would be a counselor.

Lisa's mom and Lisa as a young girl come on stage as they share her mom's stories. Lisa is listening intently to her mom who is animated as she shares her experiences with her clients at the psychiatric hospital. Lisa then returns to unfold the story for Julia about the choices she made along the way. She did not want to go into psychology in her undergrad program. She did not want to sit in an office for work. Instead, Lisa wanted to "run around in the mountains and be wild." In the group warm-up Lisa shared that she received her first degree in biology and proceeded to teach outdoor education and lead wilderness trips. Lisa says that after a few years of her first career, she pursued her master's degree and then her second career, in psychology, and when she began to consider a Ph.D. program, she knew she enjoyed the integration of different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and biology. She says,

I am more interested in how it all works together.

Lisa talks about discovering the storytelling aspect of her doctoral research at a conference and concludes that although she did know as a young girl she wanted to be a counselor, she did not know many of the details. She says that this has been a process of discovery for her.

J: *That is cool . . .*
Ten years old.

L: *How did I know that . . .?*

Somehow, I knew that I wasn't ready right away.
I am really glad that I studied biology.
That was really good for me.
I really wanted to challenge myself.

Lisa enters the end of her performance by returning to the theme of taking risks. She says that she wants to look into different opportunities for teaching in the area. She previously taught at the university where she received her master's degree and would like to build on that.

Together Lisa and Julia end their performance on a celebratory note.

L: All right! We did it!
J: Cool!

Group reflections. All four participants meet back at the dining room table and begin to explore what occurred during their performances. Johnna begins:

I had a great insight.
The last question starts with the word imagine,
a next small step.
The word imagine really stuck out for me.
I think that is my next small step.
To begin to imagine it.
Sketching out all the steps
L: That sounds great.

Molly jumps in enthusiastically with her strong stage presence:

I had a rocking time!
What stood out for me in the last question,
was a small step
that was still inside my comfort zone.

Molly explains to the group that she plans to speak with the ethnomusicology professor at the University she wants to attend next year in South Africa to gain a better understanding of what the "music scene" is at the school. Molly sums this up:

I need to open that channel and start a discussion.

Lisa responds affirmatively, then shifts into talking about her performance with Julia.

I learned a lot from my conversation with Julia.

What stands out for Lisa is noticing what it is like to "have a sense of where you want[ed] to end up" but, at the same time, not knowing "exactly how you are going to get there." Lisa also was taken by the moment when Julia shared an idea she has for her career direction and how she something right now in which she is getting involved supports her moving in this direction: a high school investment club.

I thought that was so cool.
That inspired me.
Money is something for me
where I haven't had that much confidence.
She was mentioning that numbers are exciting.

Lisa also shares that she enjoyed learning about this other aspect of Julia because she had known her previously only through basketball.

It was fun and inspiring
to find out that you are into these other things.

Julia weaves in her experience of her performance with Lisa.

Something that was really funny
Was that when you were 10
You kind of knew that you wanted to do something in psychology.
I thought, "Wow, 10 years old."
I was still thinking about cartoons.
I bet you inspired lots of adults.
You had many great ideas.
That is really cool how the mind can work,
especially in a kid.

Julia responds strongly to Lisa's younger self at 10 years old, who had come on stage earlier with her mother. Lisa responds:

That is a really good point.
People of all ages can inspire each other.
J: *Isn't it interesting.*
She was inspired by you when you were 10.
You are inspired by her when she is in high school.

Johnna underscores the way that the participants can be inspired by each other; in this case it is the 10-year-old Lisa who inspires Julia, and Julia who is able to inspire Lisa now.

Lisa shares a discovery that she made. She wants to pursue opportunities that she believes involves taking risks. Lisa has an interest in finding out more about existing higher education teaching opportunities that might be a good fit for her. She relates this to

what Molly has shared earlier, in that Lisa is aware that her next step involves gathering information by making contact with different schools in the area.

Lisa turns towards Julia and invites her to tell more about what she discovered.

That whole communication thing
Like the world today
We really don't communicate
With out that,
you really are not going to go very far.
You are not going to meet people.
You are just going to be in your little shell.
That big communicating thing.
That was a big thing for me.
A big step.
"Get out there!"
"Start talking to new people."
That is what I like.
That is what I learned today.

Johnna offers some concluding thoughts about what she has seen during her performance and the group reflections.

I think the theme is communicating.
We both (Molly and Johnna) talked about our experiences
of working with people.
Being in contact with people.
Molly met some people.
That created an opportunity later.
We now talked about working with people.
There is a lot of communicating and networking
that definitely seems important.

L: *I can see how that is true.*
Like when Julia talked to her math teacher
about the basketball camp.
Talking to someone,
can show the next step.
You can't always figure it out ahead.

The group comes to a close as Lisa thanks the participants for being a part of the study and participants shift into a more causal conversation as they prepare to leave.

Act IV.

Introduction. The fourth careering performance is similar to the third in that there are four participants, and the performance takes place at the researcher's home. The

group begins with a casual conversation between three of the participants, because one of the participants is running late. The two older women spontaneously begin to reflect on the fact that when they were the ages of the younger participants, they had limited choices for their careers: teaching, nursing, or being a secretary. This theme reemerges during the participants' performances. Once the fourth participant arrived we moved fairly quickly into the dyads, as we were a little bit behind schedule.

Scene I: Cassie and Michelle. Michelle begins by clarifying Cassie's name. Michelle then invites Cassie to take a moment to review the instructions together before starting their careering performance. Michelle is Caucasian, in her late 50s, and is currently practicing as a family psychotherapist. Cassie is Caucasian, 13 years old, and is in seventh grade at a middle school in a smaller town approximately 10 miles away. Cassie's mother, Erica, is also participating in this careering group. They choose not to be paired together. Michelle and Cassie are meeting each other for the first time.

Michelle invites Cassie to share a story about a "high point" in her life:

When my Marimba band went to the marimba musical festival.
We like spent all this time,
trying to raise money.
We finally got there.
We were really afraid.
We did really well.

As Cassie shares her story with Michelle, she emphasizes the challenges and accomplishments of the band. Cassie also shares that she had just started playing the trombone at that time with her marimba band. Cassie checks with Michelle to see if she knows what a marimba is. Michelle admits,

No, I actually don't know.
C: *It's like a xylophone.*
M: *You're kidding.*
I thought it was drums (laughter).
Okay. So what do you play in it?
C: *I play marimba, drums, percussion and I also play trombone.*

Cassie tells Michelle about an especially important moment when the music director invited her to play the trombone with his professional band.

I was really nervous.
I did it.
It was really fun.
It was really good.
M: *Wow. Wow. That sounds really exciting.*
C: *Yeah.*

Michelle suggests to Cassie that they "wonder together" about her story. Michelle brings up that Cassie said that she was nervous. Cassie explains that once she began playing she was not nervous. Instead of continuing to be nervous Cassie describes her ability to focus on the energy of the band and have "fun."
Michelle responds:

Wow. That is really cool.

Michelle continues to ask questions about Cassie's performance. She discovers that because this was specifically a marimba music festival, Cassie was playing in front of her peers and mentors. They would know if she were to make a mistake. Michelle also points out that by playing the trombone, she is also less able to "blend in" with the other players in the band. Michelle emphasizes,

And you weren't too scared to do it.
Wow.

By asking a question, Michelle puts together that it was Cassie's music director who invited her to play with his band:

M: Wow, what an honor.
C: Yeah!
M: Did you see it that way?
C: Yeah. Yeah.

Cassie then explains to Michelle that Marimba music is an oral tradition, and therefore, sheet music is not part of being in a marimba band. Cassie was able to go over the trombone part with her music director prior to the performance so she did have an idea of what she was going to be playing prior to joining her director's band. Michelle asks Cassie about the elements that made this possible.

Rick was definitely important.
He helped me get the music in line.
This guy Jim who also plays in their band,
he helped with the parts that I played also.
And, of course Anne.
She is the director kind of too.

Michelle asks Cassie if she has any qualities that have helped her in addition to the people who helped. Cassie responds:

I guess just the courage
to play in front of everybody.
M: Like risk taking?
C: I don't know.

M: I guess music ability!

Michelle talks about what she imagines might be involved in being able to play all the different instruments that Cassie plays. Cassie fills out the picture for Michelle by explaining that there are different types of marimbas that she also plays. Michelle then pulls in a cultural thread, suggesting that part of playing marimba music involves understanding Zimbabwean culture. Cassie agrees:

Yeah!

Michelle is interested to know how Cassie became involved in playing Marimba music.

C: My mom plays it too.
I liked hearing it.
So I wanted to learn.
M: Do you know how she got interested in it?
C: From her mom.
Her mom had a classical marimba.
M: Do you know how she got into it?
C: I don't know how she got into it.
M: So, there is this generational piece.

Cassie agrees. A few moments later Cassie has a realization about her grandmother's interest in music:

C: My grandma…her dad was a music teacher.
He taught all these people.
Do you listen to jazz?
M: Not much.
C: Well, he taught Billy Strayhorn
who eventually worked with Duke Ellington.
He taught Erroll Garner . . .
all these famous people.
M: Oh my gosh! There really is a thick thread.

As Michelle and Cassie peer into the past, a multigenerational performance emerges. It is quite remarkable to imagine Duke Ellington, Cassie's great grandfather, her grandmother, her mother, and her playing jazz, classical marimba, and Zimbabwean music together, on stage. Cassie informs Michelle that she has recently also "been getting into jazz."

Michelle asks Cassie how she might take "the qualities from the story and envision what might be."

M: What if you applied that courage to do

something more challenging musically,
or something for yourself?
C: I don't know . . .

At first Cassie is uncertain how to respond to Michelle's question. Michelle persists by focusing on Cassie's involvement in music.

M: Is there anything that comes to mind around your music?
C: I definitely want to do it as a profession
when I grow up.
I think I may want to play the trombone
and use marimba for other things.

Michelle ponders how Cassie might apply her sense of courage to teaching the trombone. Cassie emphatically responds:

I don't really want to teach trombone.
I would get really frustrated.
M: Oh, I though you said teach.
C: Perform.
M: Oh! Perform trombone.
That is a pretty big difference.
C: I want to perform, but if I don't make enough money off of that
I will teach it.

Lisa checks in with Cassie and Michelle and they share what they are discovering. Together, Lisa, Cassie and Michelle explore possible directions for Cassie building off of her story. Cassie returns to talking about her desire to be a professional musician and expands her vision by also imagining that she would like to create a music recording studio. Cassie recently attended a Jazz camp at a local university where she learned some of the technical skills involved in recording music. Cassie now makes a move to include another aspect of her life, which is riding horses:

I don't want to put horses to the side.
I still really like it.
I would have horses.

Cassie imagines having a recording studio, while also performing and having horses. Cassie further imagines her recording studio. Now it is filled with the musicians that would she would be working with.

That would be really fun.
To meet other musicians
and mix all of their music.
Listen to other people's music

and how they put it all together.

Cassie returns to her experience at the summer jazz camp she attended and talks about her trombone teacher, who she thinks is "very cool." He performs professionally. She also mentions her current teacher who plays for a professional ballet company. She "teaches on the side to get extra money." Cassie thinks that "is really cool the way she does that."

When Cassie tries to imagine a next small step, Michelle suggests a possibility:

Maybe it's looking for those opportunities
to step forward.
C: Yeah!
M: And you have the courage to do it.
The talent to do it.
C: I think that is definitely it.

Michelle checks with Cassie to see if there might also be a small step she wants to take by engaging her courage with riding horses.

C: Yeah.
I ride this one horse
but she is getting kind of old.
There is this other horse
that I have seen since he was born.
He is not getting any training from his owner.
I really want to help train him.
I really want to get the courage
to ask her if I can help train him.
M: So that is another opportunity thing
to use your courage?
C: Yeah.
M: Or is it courage?
C: Yeah, is it. That is neat.

Michelle now begins her careering performance. She scans the horizon of her working life while noticing what catches her attention.

Okay. So, Cassie . . .
I have had so many things.
Let's see.
I am going to go with the one that was most recent
because I can remember it.
I had a high point a week ago.
I am going to go with that.
C: Uh huh.

Michelle begins by sharing that she is a family therapist and that she also provides supervision for family therapists who are in the process of becoming licensed. Cassie clarifies:

So are you a supervisor or are you a family therapist?
M: *I have been doing marriage and family therapy as a therapist and I have also been supervising different people. What I did last week is I put three people that I am supervising together in one group. That was really fun.*
C: *Uh huh.*

Michelle describes this as a "bit of a challenge," because she had "all smart people who all had complex cases." Michelle decided to organize all three people into a single supervision group. Michelle shares more with Cassie about how this was for her:

It took interpersonal skills and some organization. I had to know each person. I had to make sure that each person would like the other people and professionally get along with them. Then we met. I wasn't really nervous. I felt confident. I was aware that I was bringing people together for an important experience.
C: *Right.*

Michelle considers the professional and social makeup of her supervision group prior to meeting. Similar to producing a play, Michelle imagines ahead of time how it will go when everyone is together. Michelle shares more with Cassie about her approach as a supervisor:

I was kind of the leader of that . . .
C: *Yeah.*
M: *. . . and then I let go of that leadership to make it collaborative so people could learn from each other and not just from me. It went really well.*

Imagining Michelle and her three supervisees on stage is an engaging scene of a dynamic collaborative learning community. To expand this scene socially, we could also imagine the families that these three therapists are working with also being present on stage.

Michelle excitedly shares with Cassie that "it went really well!" The group decided to continue to meet. Cassie in turn asks Michelle some clarifying questions so that she understands the nature of the group:

So you are a family therapist.
So how come they are just single people?
M: Oh, okay.
This is someone who is learning
how to be a family therapist.
C: Oh, okay.
M: Yeah.
C: I though it was for people that had problems.
M: So this is the person that is the therapist
who is learning better how to do therapy.
They bring with them
the people they are helping.
Not the people literally into the room
but the cases.
They talk about their cases.

In a similar fashion to Michelle's efforts to understand Cassie's music endeavors, now Cassie also has many questions in order to understand Michelle's work.

C: So did you bring them together
so that they can learn from each other?
M: Uh huh.
So they can learn from each other,
because I think that is really effective.
It is also a little cheaper for them
to do it this way.

Michelle reflects further on Cassie's question:

That is a really good question.
I think part of me
wanted to see how I could do that.
Like, it is an extra challenge.

Cassie begins to explore with Michelle more about her career path.

Why did you become a family therapist?

M: I really like working with the system.
I like working with relationships:
families or couples.
The between people stuff.
I really like that.
C: Is that what you wanted to do
when you were younger?

Michelle refers to the warm-up conversation with the large group, when Cassie's mom, Erica, talked about the limitations she experienced as a young woman when she was imaging her career possibilities. Michelle says,

When I went to school
and I was graduating,
you really only had three choices.
teacher, nurse, or secretary.
I didn't want to be a secretary
because I didn't want people to tell me what to do.
C: Yeah.
M. I didn't want to be a nurse because
I didn't really like blood and vomit.
So I thought,
"I guess I will be a teacher."

Michelle shares that she was a "good teacher" but she wanted a new challenge so she became a school counselor. Michelle then took on another challenge when she decided that she wanted to become a family therapist. Cassie responds:

Oh, cool.
M: So it is kind of like stepping-stones.
C: Oh, yeah.
And what are the elements?

Michelle first wonders, "I haven't thought about it before," then follows this comment, saying,

I guess a challenge.
I guess I like to keep learning.

Michelle revisits the step she took: first meeting individually with her supervisees and then offering a group format for supervision.

To meet one on one is one thing.
But to meet with . . .
C: . . . everyone.

M: Yeah.
C: That is cool.
M: I also knew I would need to be
a little bit sharper.
C: Right.
M: I kind of like that edge.
I have to have to meet with a group
or more than one person.

Michelle summarizes that she likes a "challenge," that she likes to "keep learning," and therefore is a "life long learner." Michelle shares that she feels she is different than Cassie in that she "gets scared to take a risk." Cassie responds:

Oh. Okay.
M: So, I have to make a leap.
I have to say,
"Oooohhh. Man, I am scared,"
and then just still do it.
C: Yeah.
M: "Oooohhh. I don't know if I can do this,"
and then I have to say,
"Of course you can!"
C: Yeah.

Michelle turns to Cassie and asks,

So what would you call that?
Taking a risk?
C: Yeah.
And probably like, the edge.
You have an edge to . . .
M: An edge to do it?
C: Yeah.

Michelle asks Cassie to share more about what she means by "an edge."

C: Like when you say,
you have an edge to bring all these people together . . .
M: Right!
Oh, and then . . .
I really do think
people can learn from each other.
Like collaboration . . .
Oh! I know what it is.
I don't think I have to know all the answers

or have all the answers.
C: Oh, yeah.

Cassie asks Michelle if she wants to keep doing the same career. Michelle begins to imagine:

What if I have a challenge?
What if I am a learner?
What if I take risks?
What if I have the edge to do it?
What if I am collaborative?
What if I am not having all the answers?
Well . . .

Michelle concludes:

I think I am at a time in my life, Cassie . . .
What can I say?
I could just keep doing
what I am doing
and not do anything new.
You know how some people get into a rut in their job . . .
C: That is kind of a good thing about what you are.
That isn't the same thing over and over again.

Michelle draws a connection with what Cassie has previously shared about her experience with music:

M: Yeah, right. So it is kind of like with your music in a way…
C: Yeah.
M: It's not playing the same music
over and over again.
C: Right.

Michelle revisits her story and does have an idea about building on the one supervision group she is doing and finding more ways to engage in teaching people how to be therapists. Michelle recognizes that at her age, the possibility of "taking more courses" or "going back to school" might not be considered, but she includes these as an option:

I think that is a possibility.
I think there still is a lot more to do.
So a next step could be…
I don't know.

Michelle turns to Cassie and says,

What are you hearing?
C: *There is a wide range of things.*
I am sure that there are more things that you can do.
M: *I think that is what I can do.*
Just keep my mind open
to new and different things.
To keep encouraging myself
in that way.

Michelle and Cassie's performance comes to a close as Michelle concludes,

Okay! We are done!

***Scene II: Nicky and Erica*.** Nicky and Erica's careering performance begins with Erica asking Nicky if she wants to think about a story. Nicky responds by saying that she has "two stories" and she isn't is not sure which to use. Nicky is Caucasian, 12 years old and a 7th grader at an arts-based middle school. Erica is Caucasian and teaches science at a private high school. She is in her late 40s. Nicky and Erica have been around each other socially but do not know each other personally. Erica responds to Nicky's struggle to choose one story:

Use both!
I think you should use both.

Erica and Nicky discuss how to proceed, and Nicky admits she "doesn't know exactly what this is supposed to be about" and she might "be in the totally wrong direction." Erica is affirming:

That is okay.
I might be doing the same thing.
Nicky begins her story:
I can't do this with work, obviously.
This was in school.
I was in 5th grade.

Nicky shares with Erica that she was "joined at the hip" with her three best friends in elementary school. Nicky expands the scene:

If we weren't doing an activity at school together,
we would start bawling.
It was like totally together
with every single thing we would do.
We were just best friends.

When middle school came around,
we were all going to go to Manning Middle School.

Erica responds like she gets it:

Yeah. That was your plan.
N: *We were going to go away to college together.*
E: *Wow. Big plans . . .*
N: *Yeah. All of it!*

Nicky and her friends found out that the school they were planning on attending together was possibly going to close down. They waited "frantically, to hear" the news about the future of their new school. The day they found out that it definitely was going to close down they "cried." Nicky and her friends had long discussions about where they should all go. It turns out that Nicky wanted to go to a different middle school than her friends. Erica responds:

Oh my god!
N: *I was like, what?*
These are my best friends.
What am I going to do?

Nicky says that she visited the school her friends had chosen, and she decided that she did "not like the feel of it." She then went to the orientation of the school she was interested in and found out that she "loved it." This school is an arts-based school.

I was like,
Oooh! I want to go!

The mother of one of Nicky's friends called her when she was struggling with this decision. While they were talking Nicky was "crying" and "really sad." This mom asked Nicky an important question:

I want to know if you can be
courageous and go to the school that you want to.
E: *Her mom said that. Wow!*
N: *I thought, "That is right!"*
I am crying because I want to go to Everett Arts School.
E: *Right! And you were sad.*
N: *I was sad because I couldn't be with my friends.*

Nicky did choose to be "courageous" and go to the arts school. She describes how her friendships have changed, and even though they may go to the same high school, she imagines they will not go back to being as close. Erica agrees:

You are never going to come back together
in the same way.
That is a cool story.

Nicky's second story is about recently trying out for a play at her middle school. Nicky wants to play the main character. Nicky describes to Erica the theatre program at her school:

Everett is known for its school plays.
Like, really, really good school plays.
The director is really, really good.
Right now I have 2 hours of theatre
every day.
E: Wow. Do they have music too?
N: Yeah. They have a huge music focus.

So far, Nicky has not been able to do any of the school plays because of schedule conflicts. The drama teacher, who is also the director of the play, shares with Nicky that the play is about the Holocaust. The main character is a girl named Raisa, who survives living in Auschwitz. Nicky brings Raisa on stage:

Raisa survives Auschwitz.
She survives and comes back.
And of course she falls in love.
The entire story of the play is like memories.
Flashbacks.
I thought she would be fun to play.

Nicky has an opinion about the main characters in the other recent school plays: *Wizard of Oz*, *Cinderella*, and *Annie*.

The main characters were girls,
but they are all, like, ditsy.
I thought, "Wow.
This character sounds strong and fun to play."
I thought, "Ooohh. I want to audition for her."
E: Yeah.

Raisa standing next to Dorothy, Cinderella, or Annie on stage does create an indelible impression. Nicky says she decided that she was going to quit gymnastics for a month so she could try out to for the part of Raisa.

So I tried out last week.
I got Raisa!
E: You did!

N: Yeah!
E: That is awesome!
N: I am really, really happy!
E: I like these choices.

Erica begins her story, which is about a meeting that occurred last week at a school where she had previously taught science. Erica explains to Nicky that her "best friend" started the Sanita school and that she helped her friend because she thought it would be a "really exciting" teaching opportunity.

There were a lot of politics
I didn't agree with.
I went back to the school that I teach at now.

The down side of Erica's current teaching situation is that she has to commute an hour each way. Nicky asks Erica where she lives, and Erica shares this information. Erica continues with her story. She says that when she was recently visiting her friend at the old school where she taught, the principal said to her:

"I would like to have a conversation with you
about science."
And I thought, "That's awesome."
I love to talk to people about science.
I have some really good ideas about science.

Erica says that a week later, she showed up at the school for the science "conversation." She wore jeans and was "just hanging out." There were four people in the room when she arrived and she jumped in, sharing her views about teaching science:

I really believe that science should be a process.

Erica says she gave an example of a recent science project she completed with her students. A friend's goat had died and all that remained was its bones after the scavenger birds had eaten away the flesh. As part of Erica's anatomy and physiology class she had each student identify and then paint one of the goat's bones.

We assembled the goat.
We entered it into the art show.
It was really awesome.
I told them,
"This is the kind of thing that it needs to be about.
When I was here before this couldn't happen."

Erica says she shared with the "conversation" group that she would love to have a farm as a way to teach about science. She also talked about how she likes teaching about muscles by riding bikes. The principal turned to Erica and asked:

"How would you feel about teaching 8th grade?"
And I said, "What? Is this a job interview?"
It was really interesting.
It was nice for me.
Now the thing is,
People are wondering if I will go teach there.

Erica imagines what might be good about this new teaching opportunity. It sounds like the school has changed and would be interested in Erica's experiential approach. The school is also a bike ride away from her home. A concern that Erica shares with Nicky is that the pay would be less. Erica talks about when she taught in a public school she was paid more "but it was horrible." Erica summarizes what is enticing about this choice:

I could change schools
and make new inroads in how science is taught.
I am leaning towards new inroads in science.
I can see doing that.
That would be very cool.
N: Wow.
E: I could ride my bike to work.
N: So you would teach at the Sanita School?
E: Yep!

Nicky asks Erica if she knows a friend of hers that attends this school. It turns out that Nicky's friend is the daughter of the principal that Erica had just met with. Erica responds:

That is who I really liked!
I was so excited to talk with her.

Erica and Nicky exchange ideas about the school. Nicky had a friend that "hated it" when she went there. Erica agrees that her experience of the school prior was that "it was horrible." Nicky explains that there was a woman who worked there formerly who was especially hard to work with.

Lisa checks in with Erica and Nicky, and they share that they decided to start by first sharing both of their stories. Erica says that Nicky has shared two "really good stories." Erica reflects for a moment:

It is really cool to hear about the choices.
You know, when you think about it,
it is all about choices!

N: Yeah.
E: Deciding, this is going to be.
Maybe not even thinking about it too much!
N: I think the choices all have to do with
what you want to do, when friends
or mothers or the other side want something else.
Not really what you want.
E: Right. It is more what your insides are saying
you could be fulfilled with.
That is very cool.
L: Great! Keep on going.

Nicky turns to Erica and asks her if she has any questions about her story. Erica responds:

Yeah. For you to make those choices:
to go to Everett or to give up gymnastics . . .
what gave you the most support
to do something like that?
N: Knowing that I could do theatre 2 hours a day.
I was just like, yeah!
That helped me.
My friend's mom,
I think really helped.
E: Yeah, that . . .
N: She maybe was the one.

Nicky repeats what her friend's mom asked her and then shares with Erica that her friends "hate" going to the school they chose. Erica and Nicky discuss how it is really difficult to switch middle schools. Nicky seems pleased with herself having made a good decision about her middle school. Erica then explores with Nicky how it was for her to talk with her coaches about taking a break so she could be in her school play. Nicky was "scared" to approach her coaches and anticipated that they would respond negatively. Instead, they were supportive.

Nicky now shares the part of her story about learning she had gotten the female lead in the school play.

That was the greatest day.
It was scary for me.

Nicky had decided that "great actors" don't give up "no matter what part they get in a play." She was determined to "stick with it" no matter what part she got. Erica agrees with that thought. Nicky also makes a note that she has never gotten a lead part in any of the plays she has tried out for in the past. For this play, Nicky was up against one of her

good friends who had played the female lead in all of the school plays. Nicky describes how the students waited at school while their drama teacher made her decision:

We were, like, ahhhhh!
We were so scared.

She shares what it was like the moment she found out about getting the lead:

Then I saw that my name was at the top of the list.
I was like, "Ohhhhhh!"

Nicky creates a compelling performance for Erica, communicating the excitement of the moment when she finds out that she is going to play Raisa in the school play. In Nicky's performance, the drama teacher and the other students are all on stage. Erica responds to Nicky's performance:

E: Awesome! So you have a neat teacher?
N: Yeah. She is awesome!
You said you had to sit there while she was deciding?
Wow. That is brutal.
N: Yeah! It was worth it.
E: I think that was a neat attitude that you have:
No matter what part you get you will still act.

Erica and Nicky reflect together about the value of applying Nicky's "attitude" to life in general. They both agree that there is much to learn from different experiences.

Nicky asks Erica:

What about you?

With Nicky, Erica explores her potential decision to change schools. She makes a note that she "loves the kids" that she currently teaches. Nicky responds:

That is cool.
E: We have really neat discussions.
The way I teach a class is
I will give them 15 minutes of notes.
Then I tell stories.
Then we will look at pictures on the Internet,
or we will do a lab.
We are studying diseases.

Erica steps on stage and becomes a teacher in her classroom. She is dynamic and engaged. Nicky responds by sharing a story about a "cool lab" she did recently in her science class, doing a DNA experiment. Nicky concludes:

I wish you were my teacher.
E: That is so nice.

Erica excitedly tells Nicky about the experiment she started last week with her students on mutated bacteria. Erica and Nicky engage in a lively dialogue about what makes a good teacher and what makes a good school, as Erica continues to contemplate her decision about where to teach.

Before ending, Nicky slips in one last story about the male lead in the play being a friend of hers. She says that she and her friend had decided to try out together so they could show their "chemistry" to her teacher. Nicky is "not too happy" because she has to kiss him. Erica suggests that she "close her eyes."

When Lisa comes to let Erica and Nicky know that is time to join the group, Nicky and Erica both agree that they took a "fluid approach" to their careering performance.

***Group reflections*.** As the four participants reconvene at the dining room table where they began, they easily shift into a group conversation. Erica begins:

I think it was easy for Nicky to makes choices
because she had support from different people.

Nicky summarizes what stood out for her:

It was about
what you wanted to do,
compared to what other people wanted you to do,
or compared to what society
wanted you to do.

Erica responds:

Yeah. That's right.
What was right for her instead.
It was very cool.

Erica shares that her situation was similar to Nicky's but that she has a decision that she has not yet made. Michelle begins to talk about her and Cassie's performance but then invites Cassie join in. Cassie responds:

I really don't know what to say.

Michelle begins again, but asks Cassie to share what she thinks as they go along.

I thought our conversation was . . .

I can't think of the word . . .
It was really equal.
C: Yeah.
M: We really collaborated.
I thought you really gave me some insight.
C: Yeah.
M: Remember the part you said about needing an edge?
You gave me some insights
that helped me think of some things that were inspiring.
C: Yeah.
M: That was pretty cool.

Nicky jumps in and asks if everybody could "briefly summarize in a sentence what theirs was about." Everyone agrees and then looks to Nicky to begin. Nicky responds:

I didn't mean that I would go first!

Nicky does proceed to summarize her story, and then Cassie, Michelle, and Erica follow suite. While each person shares her story the others respond with interest.

Erica makes note of the evolving nature of work, and as an example, she uses a recent experience she had with her older daughter who was rejected from nursing school. Erica's daughter came to realize that nursing school was not a good fit for her and that she was more interested in exercise science.

She was sobbing on Wednesday.
Today she is excited.
That is the same thing you guys are talking about.
I love that.

Lisa responds:

Yes. You were talking about opportunities emerging
and jumping into those.
C: Uh-huh!

Erica reflects on an important conversation she had with her daughter while hiking recently. Erica identifies this as the turning point when her daughter began to figure out a better direction for herself regarding her studies. Erica concludes:

Letting her talk.
Listening and talking some more . . .
That is what it is!

The group now shifts to talk about and celebrate the fact that Nicky got the lead in her school play. Nicky had left that part out when she shared her summary earlier.

Michelle responds:

Oh, my gosh!
Congratulations!

Nicky talks about how her school was almost named after Einstein, and Erica responds:

Yeah. Einstein would be bad.
N: *But remember, he flunked math!*

Erica summarizes:

Those were such great stories!

Nicky continues her thread of famous people who "failed":

And Michael Jordan didn't make his basketball team . . .
and Albert Einstein flunked math!!!
E: *Yeah! You start to hear all these stories . . .*

Michelle pulls out something that stands out for her about her performance with Cassie:

I think that a real lesson to take out of this is,
maybe, where we have experienced these qualities isn't where
more investment needs to happen.
It could be taking those qualities
and putting them somewhere else.
She gave an example of training a new horse.
E: *Oh yeah.*

Lisa suggests:

Maybe riding horses helps her play her music?

Erica agrees:

Yeah. It is connected.
Michelle pulls out another interesting thread:
Plus the whole generational thing
was really fascinating with her family.
I don't know how we got into that.
I asked . . .

C: . . . how I got interested?
M: Oh, yeah.
C: Yeah. With music . . .

Erica, Cassie's mom, completes the story about Cassie's great grandfather. His father was a Presbyterian minister and considered the trumpet "devils music." Cassie's great grandfather convinced his parents to let him play the trumpet because he "loved to play so much." When he played in the music clubs in Philadelphia, he did not enjoy the drug scene, so he turned his attention towards teaching rather than performing. Nicky says that Cassie's great grandfather's story reminds her of the movie *Ray* which she had seen recently. Erica agrees that the music scene was "just like that." Michelle looks further:

I wonder how he got the trumpet!
E: Yeah. Exactly!
M: That makes me think of angels playing trumpets . . .
Maybe an angel gave it to him!
That might be a fun story to find out . . .
C: Yeah!

Lisa asks Nicky about the support she received that was helpful. Nicky shares that it was a friend's mom. Erica also points out that Nicky's gymnastic coaches were an important part of the support that Nicky received during this time.

The group winds to an ending:

E: Thank you Lisa.
That was really fun.
M: Such great young women . . .
E: It is exciting, isn't it!
M: Oh yeah. I think so!
E: My friend started an outdoor program for women
because of a conversation she had with her good friend.

Nicky excitedly shares that Erica's friend presented the program at her school. Erica has the final comments:

That is very cool!
Thanks, gang!

Participants' responses to the careering performances. This careering research design was created with the intention of providing a useful experience for the participants while at the same time allowing a venue for exploring the concept of careering and its usefulness for girls and women. In this section, I turn directly to the participants and listen to the comments that they provide at the end of their careering performances. Two aspects of the participants' comments are reviewed: (a) their reflections about the

careering design as a way to explore their careering process and (b) how they experienced the cross-generational parings. As I review the participant's comments, I am also asking a few basic questions about the careering performances: Were they useful to the participants as a means to explore their careers? Did the girls and women benefit from their shared interactions? Were these interactions mutual? Did the careering performances provide a generative experience for the participants?

I began this careering research undertaking with the idea that cross-generational pairings would prove to be mutually beneficial for both the women and the girls in this study. This perspective stands in contrast to a more traditional mentoring model whereby the older, wiser person counsels the younger, less knowledgeable person. I had arrived at this understanding based on the prior work experience I had with a youth involvement program that created cross-generational alliances between teenagers and adults as a method for creating community leadership. In addition, my perspective is informed by the theory of social constructionism, which highlights co-coordinated action between people as the generative site for creating new personal and social constructs. I have also brought on stage Mead's (1970) concept of a prefigurative culture, wherein the elders in society learn from the younger members about "what is to become" (p. 68). Mead emphasizes the importance of adults accessing experiential knowledge from the youth in order to be able to build together "a viable future" (p. 73). The other significant element of the careering design is the positive question, drawn from Appreciative Inquiry. I anticipated that element this would render the careering performances "positive" in tenor, because participants would be sharing stories about a "high point" related directly to either their working lives or to school/community.

In the following discussions of Acts I-IV, I explore whether these ideas and intentions for this careering research project were fulfilled: providing a useful experience for the participants, an expectation that the cross-generational pairing would be mutually beneficial, and the "positive" tenor of the performances. When discussing specific participants, I refer to the Act that they participated in and provide their ages by their names to assist the reader in following the cross-generational component of the study.

Act I. During the group reflections for Act I, a consistent tone of appreciation was evident, as demonstrated in the opening comment by Jenna (52). Jenna speaks to her experience of the cross-generational pairings:

> *I appreciated being paired younger with older. It is nice to learn from the younger generation. That was cool . . . valuing the energy and commitment and the talent that young woman have that we don't often get a chance to talk about.*

Jackie (13), who was paired with Jenna, responds right away, talking about how she "liked" Jenna and that Jenna was "cool" and "awesome." Jackie also talks about how Jenna was "supportive" of the protest that she organized with her friend and noted that Jenna even suggested that she should "run for president." Imagining into her future, Jackie concludes her comments with a statement one might expect to hear in a more traditional mentoring relationship: "She seems like the kind of women that I will be when I grow up." Both Jenna and Jackie express excitement about their experiences with each

other during their performance. Jenna mentions that even though she works as a librarian and previously was a high school teacher; she still does not often have a chance to talk with the "younger generation" about their positive experiences and future dreams. Jenna shares that "it is nice to learn from the younger generation," noting that not only did she learn some things from her careering performance with Jackie but that she also enjoyed it.

Jordan (13) shares that it was "really cool" to have a chance to talk with someone older than her who has "more experience." Jordan points out that her friends are more likely to talk amongst themselves and that they "usually don't talk to people that are older." Jessica (36), Jordan's careering partner, notes how much she was able to see herself in Jordan and was drawn to the "mirroring" that occurred between them, reflecting their commonalities. Jessica mentions that she hears people talk about a generation gap, typically inferring a lack of commonality between generations. Jessica's experience of the careering performance is notably different than this perception.

Shawna (48) agrees with Jenna's (52) comment about enjoying being paired younger with older. Shawna talks specifically about her careering partner, Ava (13), and the affirming experience she had connecting with Ava's enthusiasm. She describes Ava as "wise" and "having a lot of perspective." Shawna also makes a note about how women "can get silenced and suppressed," because they are not supposed to express themselves openly. By having performed with Ava, Shawna is reminded that "wisdom has a lot of enthusiasm with it." Ava helped Shawna remember that she can challenge any experiences she has of being silenced. In fact, Ava *showed* Shawna ways that she can express herself enthusiastically while also demonstrating wisdom. Shawna's ability to be open and expressive with Ava turns out to be the very thing that made her trustworthy to Ava. Because Shawna did not try to impress Ava and did not pretend to be "perfect," Ava was better able to "look up to" Shawna. Ava describes Shawna as a "role model," similar to how Jackie talks about Jenna. Shawna poetically describes Ava in multiple ways, using words and phrases such as "enthusiasm," "exuberance," "thinks deeply," "has a lot of perspective," and concluding with "it was really nice to be reminded of that and to be understood."

Alexis (15) surprises her mom, Sue (55), with whom she was paired, when she comments, "I learned that I am a lot like my mom." Sue shares that she "learned a lot" by being paired with her daughter Alexis and described Alexis as her "teacher." Alexis is able to see herself in her mom at the same time that Alexis, as an adolescent, is presumed to be focused on her identity development, which includes separating from her parents. This may account for Sue's reaction of surprise and the group's laughter in response. Claire (15) shares a similar comment about her mom, Amy (48), with whom she was paired: "It was surprising that we agreed on the things that we were talking about." Claire says that she discovered that she and her mom share similar values and interests about "helping people around the world." Amy notes that she "appreciated the opportunity" to be in a mixed-age group where they were "enjoying each other and valuing each other." Amy points out that she often is around groups of teenagers in her home, yet they rarely have the chance to talk together in an "open and positive way." Alexis, Sue, Amy, and Claire all describe generative outcomes from their careering performances that relate to the cross-generational pairing.

In summary, all the participants from Act I provided commentary about appreciating the cross-generational pairings and the mixed-age group. I believe that using the positive storytelling as a jumping off point for the careering performances laid the ground for a different type of interaction between the girls and women. One of the discernible differences reflected in the participants' comments was an increased openness that allowed the participants fairly quickly to enter each other's worlds and have an experience that is not typical between generations. It is possible that sharing positive stories served as vehicle to move past the common social construct of a generation gap.

Act II. Act II involved two participants, which was a significant change from the first careering group that I conducted. Although Lynn (45) and Katelyn's (13) careering performance is dynamic and seemingly rich, when asked about their experience at the end of their performance, they both initially express frustration and uncertainty:

K: It was hard to know what you expected.
L: It is hard to know if you hit on anything.
K: I don't know if I said anything important.

In Act II, although I did provide a similar introduction to the project, I did not provide the same storytelling warm-up exercises as I did in Act I. From the perspective of making their careering performance a useful experience for Katelyn and Lynn, it is evident that they would have benefited from more opportunities at the beginning to develop a context and understanding of what they were engaging in. I also think that because their performance involved only the two of them, they did not have the advantage of sharing this experience with other group members.

After Katelyn's and Lynn's initial ending comments, the three of us delve into what became a dynamic careering process. With all three of us engaged in the careering performance, Katelyn and Lynn are better able to make sense of their experience. Act II carries with it a blending of not knowing and trepidation with shared encouragement resulting in multiple co-creative moments. Although I may conclude that Katelyn and Lynn's careering performance demonstrated a rich generative careering process, for the purpose of this section, listening to their words, it was difficult for Katelyn and Lynn to understand what they were doing, and they do not indicate that they felt it was beneficial.

Act III. Act III involved four participants, including me as one of the participants. Johnna (42) begins the group reflections by talking about the insight she gained during her careering performance with Molly (17). Johnna says she discovered that it will be useful to focus on imagining, and therefore sketching out steps she can take to create her next career move. Molly very enthusiastically jumps in and shares the relief she felt knowing that her next small step could be in her comfort zone as well as being helpful. Molly comments that breaking down her future into smaller performative steps was a useful component of the careering guidelines. Both Molly and Johnna speak about the concrete outcomes they gained from their careering performance. Molly talks about having a "rocking time," and Johnna seems pleased that she knows what she needs to do next for her work. The tenor of Molly and Johnna's comments is upbeat and engaged,

and they both appear to have enjoyed their careering performances. They do not mention specifically the cross-generational aspect of their performance.

I, Lisa, (45) talk about what I gained from my performance with Julia (16). It was helpful to have shared a story about my own careering, remembering what I was like when I was a little girl. This story reminds me that when I have ideas about my future they often are seeds. The details emerge as my ideas unfold. I describe hearing about Julia's investment club as "cool" and report that it was "fun and inspiring" getting to know Julia better. Julia talks about how I must have inspired adults when I was a young girl and I knew I wanted to go into psychology. This sparks a group reflection on the possibility of being inspired by each other at different ages and Johnna's comment:

> *Isn't it interesting? She* (Julia) *was inspired by you when you were 10. You* (Lisa) *are inspired by her when she is in high school.*

The notion of being inspired by each other at different ages captures the interest of this group and certainly is an exciting moment for me, given my interest in this very topic. It has not occurred to me previously that I might have inspired adults when I was a young girl, as Julia suggests. Act III has an overall feel of excitement, and all the participants acknowledge in some way the usefulness of the shared performances.

Act IV. Act IV, the last careering performance, also involved four participants. During the group reflections, participants continue to interweave their stories, while also expressing appreciation towards each other. Michelle (58) speaks about feeling like she and Cassie (13) "collaborated," and she also shares a specific moment when Cassie's question helped her clarify that she "needs an edge" in her work. Michelle also comments her realization that the setting where one has experienced positive qualities is not necessarily where they may need to be applied. She uses the example of Cassie deciding that she wants to focus more on training a new horse rather than the development of her music.

Nicky (12) expresses an interest in knowing about what the other participants shared. Nicky also takes the opportunity in the large group to announce that she has been given the lead in the upcoming school play. Erica (43) draws on an experience she had has had recently with her older daughter, who was struggling with her career direction. Erica uses this example to emphasize her belief that it is important to be available to "listen and talk." Cassie's ending comment, "such great women," backed by Nicky's response, "It is exciting, isn't it!" brings the group to a close.

To summarize, the participants of Act IV expressed positive comments about their careering performance. Both Erica and Michelle directly complemented their younger counterparts, whereas Cassie and Erica did not make any direct comments but addressed the whole group at the end.

General summary. Upon reviewing all of participant's comments about their experiences of the careering performances, I find them primarily positive. The two participants who expressed frustration and uncertainty during their group reflections comprised the smallest group, and although they shared their frustrations, their shared

performance had several notable co-created metaphors for making sense of their careering. At this point, I can confidently say that the performances were generative. I can also note that because I chose a design based on Appreciative Inquiry, it is not surprising that the careering performances were, in a sense, positive performances and that participants found value in their experience. In addition, my expectation that the performances would be mutuality beneficial for both generations did hold true based on the participants comments. This brief summary of the four careering groups suggests that the participants found them to be enjoyable and generative. In the next chapter I will expand on my findings by reflecting further on the themes and relational processes that that have been highlighted in the careering performances of this chapter.

Chapter VII
Careering: Renderings of a Relational Perspective

In the previous chapter, the 10 careering performances from this study were presented. Each careering performance, or scene, was constructed with the intent of foregrounding the three content themes—success, uncertainty, and imagination—and two relational processes—relational engagements and improvisational moments—identified through my use of The Listening Guide (Gilligan, et al., 2003). Emerging repeatedly through out the performances were significantly relational views of success, uncertainty, and imagination. By emphasizing the relational processes within the performances, a relational flow connecting moments of success, uncertainty, and imagination was noticed as taking shape.

A summary of the participants' responses to their careering performances concluded the previous chapter. In general, the participants spoke favorably about their experiences participating in the careering groups.

Building on chapter VI, where I provided numerous examples of how the themes of success, uncertainty, and imagination co-emerged with relational processes, this chapter presents further discussion of these observations. The interconnections between success, uncertainty, and imagination in a continuous relational process are examined, and reflection is provided on how this informs the concept of careering.

Careering: Relational Revisions of Success

Our ideas about success provide the framework for developing meaning in our working lives. From media news reports, Internet, magazines, and newspapers, powerful images of what society considers success flood our lives. These images serve to set standards for how we come to measure success in our own lives. Defining career success for women has remained a difficult task, because women often maintain career and family/relational aspirations that are experienced as being at odds. This is especially true within a traditional conceptualization of career success evident in the popular metaphor of climbing the corporate ladder. Maintaining traditional interpretations of career success often means that women come up short and their relational concerns remain on the sidelines.

Although increasingly more members of society have nontraditional careers, conventional ideas of success such as achieving status and wealth, remain in tact. A "success" discourse is woven into many aspects of one's life; especially regarding careers, and therefore individuals are considered successful or, for some, seen as a failure. Especially in hard economic times, it is not difficult to see how the construct of success leaves many members of society feeling as though they have failed.

Typically when discussing one's career success, it is presumed that it is "the individual" that is successful. With this presumption in the foreground, the numerous relationships and relational processes that have been central to one's success recede into the background. Occasionally, someone may mention a valued mentor or speak to the fact that they enjoyed working in a particular organization, but rarely is it acknowledged that our career successes are highly relational events. If we think about the iconic resume,

or curriculum vitae, that serves to communicate our work and academic experience to prospective employers or other professionals, there is no place on the page that includes the multitudes of fellow workers, friends, and family members that have been instrumental in all of our gains. The relational webs of work are nearly invisible when it comes to conversations of success.

The stories shared by the women and girl participants of this study are ordinary presentations about "high points" that occurred during their work and/or other relevant experiences. From a traditional perspective, some participant's careers might be considered successful, whereas others might not. Also, from the same perspective, some of the girls might be viewed successful as students, athletes, or community members, and some may not. Within the ordinariness of these performances, one of the recurring motifs was reference to other actors and the significance other actors held in the participants' understanding of their success. As participants brought on stage these significant actors, their performances took on a lively and often inspiring tenor. During some of the performances, participants turned towards each other and co-created their own, local understanding of success. It was as if I was witnessing moments of improvisational theatre, where the participants together took flight and played off each other, constructing their own definitions of success. During these times in particular, these ordinary stories became extraordinary moments. In this section, drawing on the careering performances of the girl and women participants in this study, we will examine further these two findings related to the construct of success: relational interpretations of success and local constructions of success.

When Jessica[14] talked with Jordan[15] about the success of her play that she wrote and produced, she referenced all the participants who were involved in this production.

We rehearsed for 3 months and put on a really great production.

Jessica shared that her success was partially due to believing in her ideas and following through with her thinking, but she very quickly turned to the importance of having "enough people" that "respected" and "loved" her as being "key" to "make the project go well." Although Jessica was able to use the success of her play on her list of personal accomplishments, she was clear that the play's success was a shared endeavor fueled by love and respect. By using language that is often spoken when affirming one's intimate relationships—*love* and *respect*—Jessica intertwined the typically disparate worlds of love and work. By speaking of love, Jessica set a tone of connected collaboration, establishing her play as a relational accomplishment.

Throughout Claire's[16] descriptions of the two fundraisers that she helped create, she frequently used "we" to describe the development of these events. She appeared less

[14] Act I/Scene I: Jessica is a 36-year-old Caucasian playwright.

[15] Act I/Scene I: Jordan is Caucasian, 13-years-old, a middle school student and is from Israel.

[16] Act I/Scene IV: Claire is 15 years old and a freshman in high school.

concerned about her individual accomplishments. When she spoke about the success of these fundraisers she again chose to reference the group by using "we":

> *We raised $3,000!*

Later, when Claire spoke about the second fundraiser in which she was involved, she shared,

> *I don't know if I actually got sponsors to pay. We did raise a lot of money*.

Although Claire and her performance partner, Amy,[17] who is also her mother, did not describe Claire's engagement in the fundraisers as demonstrating leadership, when I listened to her performance, leadership was one of the qualities that stood out for me. The image of a successful leader conjures an image of a powerful person being in the front of the line, being in charge, and providing direction to a group of individuals. Claire showed a dynamic, very social expression of leadership. She expresses that she "cares"' about the first graders and communicates that her experience is a collective one, involving the whole group.

Shawna's[18] description of her previous career as a trainer in a computer company was infused with multiple social references as she discussed the ways she "loved" her job and became an "expert." Intertwined with Shawna's descriptions about her success were stories about her colleagues and the ways that they collaborated to expand their knowledge and enhance their progress in the company.

> *The group I was in of technical people was really supportive. We liked teaching each other things, working together as a team. Rather than it being a thing of showing off or being competitive, we were really encouraged to get really good at what we did, so we could teach other people how to do it*.

When Shawna was recognized as an "expert," she was asked to develop a computer training class for professionals. As she developed her training, she drew upon a significant relationship she had had as a student with her former math teacher. Shawna described her math teacher:

> *She loved math and she would get so excited about teaching someone else who also loved math.*

Shawna also shared that her experience of working closely with her colleagues was an important resource for discovering an effective approach to training. She was able to

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[17] Act I/Scene IV: Amy is in her late 40s and has been a stay-at-home mom and an active community member. Amy is exploring possible career directions for when she reenters the paid workforce.

[18] Act I/Scene II: Shawna is 48 years old and a masters-level psychology student.

discern from this experience what would be helpful for her future students. In a sense, Shawna co-created her computer training class with her previous math teacher and her colleagues at that time. She also learned performative possibilities by looking back on her experiences with her math teacher and by reflecting on different ways of learning with her colleagues.

The social aspects of Shawna's work would not be evident if Shawna were to list her professional accomplishments, but as she shared stories about her work experiences, the relational threads expanded the image of Shawna on a solitary career path. Instead, Shawna's career involves multiple, important relationships, and her stories invited these relational threads to the foreground.

Shawna spoke with Ava[19], her careering partner, in a dynamic and inspiring manner as she shared her stories about becoming successful in the white-male dominated information technology (IT) field. She did not indicate that she experienced discrimination as a women or as an African American. In a recent study that involved 11 successful women who have had careers in the IT field, the authors found that all these women seemed to downplay the role gender played in their career and they argue that their reluctance to focus on gender may have "facilitated their success." (Demaiter & Adams, 2009, p. 31). The authors postulate that

> women that survive in gendered environments may de-emphasize the significance of gender, to fit in with their male co-workers. This contributes to a reluctance to see gender structures acting against women, and a general acceptance of the masculine workplace structure and culture as it exists. (p. 49)

The authors note that although downplaying gender may have helped these women be successful, this very fact may limit their participation in bringing about organizational changes that could benefit women over the long run.

It is not known if Shawna would say that she experienced barriers in her career progression as a women and/or as an African American, and if she did, whether that is a narrative she would use. I also do not know if Shawna would say that she adapted to a white-male-dominant environment by acting in a way that she "fit in." I am able to ascertain, however, that Shawna expressed significant "exuberance" as she recalled her IT work experience, and she suggested that her IT work relationships and her math teacher both played a part in discovering performative possibilities for engaging her work. Shawna linked her ability to letting herself "be really excited" to her success as a corporate trainer. Based on Shawna's "excitement" and "exuberance," it is easy to see her as significant actor in creating the environment she was working in. Although I understand the necessity and importance of recognizing and challenging barriers to success for Caucasian women and women of color working in organizations, I also want

[19] Act I/Scene II: Ava was paired with Shawna for their careering performances. Ava is Caucasian, 13 years old, and a middle school student. She is also the researchers' daughter.

to note that narratives of discrimination may or may not be central for all women as they proceed in their careers. Demaiter and Adams's (2009) study suggests that "de-emphasizing gender" may have assisted the successful women they studied to "fit in" with their male co-workers. In the case of Shawna, she does not appear to only be "fitting in" with her male co-workers, but it is not difficult to imagine that she is also participating in constructing the work environments in which she engages.

Considering Shawna and Ava's performance, we can see how positive stories performed relationally can serve to co-construct and expand on effective narratives for women's success. Shawna and Ava both became animated when they came upon a part of their performance that challenged how we might typically view success and started to create their own local understandings. When Shawna began to talk about how much she "really, really liked being good" at her job as a trainer, she established that being good at her work was different than "showing off." Rather than being interested in "looking good" Shawna focused on her interactions with her students and their success at learning the material.

Ava offered her perspective on this:

> *You were putting others before you, instead of worrying, "I can't mess up. I can't look bad."*

Ava reiterated that Shawna's ideas of success resonated for herself:

> *You are paying more attention to, like, how they are understanding, instead of looking good. I think that when you do that, it will make you look better.*

Shawna responded,

> *Yeah . . . it is funny. You do end up looking better, and people remember you better. You stay in their minds, and they admire you more, even though you are not trying to be admired.*

Ava agreed,

> *Yeah. That is exactly it. Yeah*.

Shawna and Ava both negotiated typical images of "looking good," which mirror white male constructions of success: appearing self-confident, knowledgeable, and in control. They simultaneously reasserted what makes sense to them: a relationally oriented success. Shawna and Ava's understanding of success is a socially engaged performance that includes moments such as Shawna paying close attention to how her students were doing, rather trying to "look good," and being a part of a learning team with her colleagues. Although Shawna's focus on her relationships with her students may be not be unusual amongst those who are in helping related professions, I am aware that Shawna was training other professionals in computer skills, which meant she was teaching in a

business setting. I imagine for Shawna to step back from promoting a certain type of image of her self did mean that she was stepping outside of a workplace norm.

Ava, in the telling of her story, presented an atypical example of success. She described a difficult decision she made, resulting in her declining an opportunity to join an adult marimba band. Joining the adult band would be a move up in status, because Ava was at that time a member of a youth marimba band. Ava shared that she felt like she made a "good" decision. She realized that by joining the adult band she would "sacrifice" her friendships, and she thought that this was not "how a teenager should live." Shawna joined with Ava by sharing that she wanted to "acknowledge" that Ava was able to "take multiple things into account" and consider what would be "age appropriate" for herself. As part of their careering performance, Ava and Shawna each constructed her own local understanding of success by affirming and expanding on each other's stories. They both emphasized their relationships as an integral aspect of how they performed their success.

As Ava and Shawna neared the end of their performance, they played back and forth, expanding on what had emerged during their time together. Shawna expressed what it was like for her to love teaching and Ava joined in; together they performed in an improvisational manner.

> *Shawna: I don't know if you have something in your life that you so love, that it stops mattering. You can't hold it down. What can be so neat about being around your friends is you don't have to hold it back.*
> *Ava: Yeah, you can have fun.*
> *S: Yeah. You can just let yourself be really excited, but I really found that helped with my teaching. I couldn't hold down how I loved what I was teaching. I wanted that guy to be confident.*
> *A: Yeah. That was cool that you did that for someone else.*
> *S: Sometimes when you love something, you know you are just going to be silly.*
> *A: Yeah! (Laughter)*

Ava and Shawna's careering performance underscored love, not holding it down, being "silly", and being "cool" when you are able to help someone else. Similar to Jessica's performance, Shawna also spoke about love and the importance of her relationships as she spoke about her success. Ava spoke directly to the importance of her friendships as she considered her next move playing music as well as the support she received from her family in making this decision. Ava felt "good" about her decision not to join the more advanced marimba group, a choice which is counter to a more typical progression of success.

When Johnna[20] told Molly[21] a story about her previous management job, she discussed how she marked her success:

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[20] Act III/Scene I: Johnna is 43 years old, Caucasian, and a masters-level psychology student.

> *The high point in my time there was watching other people start to pick up pieces of the business and being able to say, "I would like to do this." They were doing with me what I was doing with the next level of management, by saying, "I would like to do this, and this is the result I am expecting, and it will cost this much money," and that sort of thing. It was rewarding.*

Johnna shared with Molly that the most meaningful part of her job was helping her employees grow personally. Similarly, Shawna spoke about focusing on seeing her students succeed rather than "looking good." Notably, neither Johnna nor Shawna referenced their progress "up the ladder."

As Molly discovered what contributed to her high point—being invited to play with several bands at a large Zimbabwean music festival—she first recognized her confidence and perseverance as being critical to her success. Molly then stated clearly that she could not have done what she did without the "entire community." Molly described in more detail how she performed her success:

> *It is* not *about actually saying that I am good enough and you need to have me play. It's about showing people that I am good enough to do this. "You want me to play with your band, don't you!"*

Molly's story about success emphasized her playfulness as she reached out to connect and join in with other bands. Her description of doing this reveals that she was performing her confidence. Molly's interactions with the other bands were what led to a co-construction of her ultimate success.

Sue[22] shared with Alexis[23], her daughter and performance partner, about the number of important relationships that she developed when she first started working at a previous job with a substance abuse prevention program

> *I started to do a lot of work with Jill. I went away to be part of a 2-week training. I met Nancy. I met John. I got close with Jill, close with Mary. I ended up meeting Lisa too.*

Sue noted that as she became more involved in this job, in her colleagues' "feedback," she was "recognized" as being good. Listening to Sue describe her success, it was evident that for her, this was a powerful social process that involved significant relationships with a number of people. Similarly, Alexis's success also evolved as a

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[21] Act III/Scene I: Molly was paired with Johnna for her careering performance. Molly is Caucasian, 17 years old, and a senior in high school

[22] Act I/Scene III: Sue is Caucasian, in her early 50s and directs a woman's resource center at a university.

[23] Act I/Scene III: Alexis is Caucasian, 15 years old, and a freshman at a public alternative high school.

social process. Alexis spoke about the kids whom she teaches at the rock-climbing gym where she works:

The kids love me at the gym.

Alexis talked with confidence about having a range of work performances whereby she can be a "bitch" if she needs to keep her young climbers safe but also be "fun," "chilled," and "calm." Both Alexis and Sue shared experiences of discovering through relationships, colleagues, or students that they were good at what they were doing.

Toward the end of Alexis and Sue's performance, they spontaneously joined together, co-creating a metaphor which helped them make sense of their shared qualities and local understandings of success.

Sue: If we went hiking with other people, you and I joked about how we are the free spirited ones. You and I would go off the trail!!!
Alexis: Yes, except now they would say that is bad because it is erosional.
Sue: So, there is an element of doing it with care. This is exciting for me to think about.

When Sue asked Alexis what "stepping off the trail" means to her, Alexis responded,

I just always go back to the fact that I am my own person.

Alexis proceeded to denounce common measures of success by proclaiming that she does not want to be "stereotypical successful," "make[ing] a bunch of money," or "get[ting] married." Alexis and Sue concluded their performance with Alexis asking Sue if she would help her out if "anything major came up," if she chose to live in a van when she gets out of college. Sue agreed that she is willing to help Alexis if it was for the purpose of supporting Alexis "exploring something else." Whereas Sue and Alexis are mother and daughter, defining success locally is especially useful for knowing how to move forward together.

It is evident from this small sample of careering performances that success is not only accomplishments listed on a resume but also a wildly rich series of social performances that continue throughout one's career or working life. As is demonstrated through these careering examples, diverse interpretations of success are constructed in relationship. These local constructions of success stand in contrast to conventional interpretations of success in Western society. We are unlikely to see a news report about Alexis deciding to live in a van for a year in order to travel and rock climb around the country, including her mom's agreement to continue to cover her health insurance during this time, and Ava's decision not to join the adult band will not make it into the accomplishments section of the newspaper. These progressions typically are not considered newsworthy announcements, yet they can serve as the necessary stepping stones for creating a meaningful life.

To conclude this section I offer a brief story from my work as a psychotherapist. A client expressed an interest in making a career change. She had been teaching in a private school and was interested in becoming an administrator at a university. She was having difficulty moving forward with her plan to go back to school and pursue a PhD in order to make this career change. In one of our meetings, another interest of hers emerged that was unexpected and seemingly unrelated. A lively conversation ensued about her desire to learn how to play the drums. Immediately, she set up lessons with a drum teacher and began playing with much enjoyment. She discovered that although she was not "very good" at playing the drums, it was freeing and inspiring for her to be learning something "for fun." Soon afterward, she was able to sign up for a doctoral program and found that she was hopeful and inspired to move forward with her plans.

Playing the drums was not part of this client's idea of what would help her proceed on her career path, nor was learning to play the drums part of her image of being successful. Perhaps *not* expecting to be good at something she was learning freed this client to expand her performative options. The story of who she was—"hard working" and "serious" —was not serving her at this time. This client did not discover a new performance in isolation. Psychotherapy and an engaging drum teacher provided an opportunity for her to co-construct new versions of herself and create a wider frame for being successful. Through these relationships, a new performance emerged for her that was playful, adventurous, and served her better at this juncture of her life.

Careering: Generating a Path From Uncertainty to Discovery

The concept of career and related career development theories were established within the tradition of modern science. Within the scientific paradigm, we are always striving toward *knowin*g, and *not knowing* is a temporary state to be alleviated through the acquisition of knowledge. The primacy of knowing is central to our common understanding of the development of one's career path. Parsons (1909), one of the originators of career development methods, argued for the importance of choosing the right vocation in a "careful scientific way" (p. 1). From this perspective, *knowing* is what allows one's career path to move forward, akin to a well-tuned car gliding down the highway. Not knowing, or uncertainty, on the other hand, invokes the image of the same car at a stand still or perhaps even in the ditch waiting for a tow truck. For the career builder, uncertainty easily becomes equated with not going anywhere.

It is not difficult to understand how some individuals might struggle to define a direction for their career. Sometimes career paths simply dry up, which is the case for my neighbor who was laid off several months ago from the architect firm where she had worked for many years. Because she was not up to date in the most current use of architectural software, she decided to "retire" early and explore other directions for her work. At times, she feels this is a favorable life change; at other times, she experiences great uncertainty as to what is next. I currently have several college-age clients who continually revisit their possible career plans with significant uncertainty and doubt. Sometimes they speak of this with excitement, but other times, they express trepidation. A current client who is in her late 40s was recently divorced. She made the decision to go back to school so that she could expand her previous career in real estate to include

interior design services. Prior to this decision, she expressed significant uncertainty about what she wanted to do next. A quick glimpse at my current client caseload and my neighborhood provides multiple examples of people facing significant uncertainty as they determine how to proceed with their careers. Recognizing uncertainty as a familiar aspect of most individuals' career trajectories begins to expand the way we might think about career.

In step with modern science, ideas of career are construed through prescriptive language, whereby related concepts like *success*, as discussed in the previous section, remain singular in their scope and therefore unimaginative. As unitary concepts such as career and success no longer hold true, uncertainty begins to surface (Cohen, et. al., 2004). While listening to the careering performances of this study, I found that uncertainty emerged as a powerful theme throughout. In particular, two aspects of uncertainty captured my attention. One was the frequency of expressions of uncertainty that ran through out the performances of both girl and women participants. The other was the generative relational process that was intertwined with moments of uncertainty. As you will see in the following examples from the careering performances of this study, this relational process was a key element for helping the girls and women discover their next careering move.

When Lynn[24] talked about starting her rose business, she "didn't know what that looked like," because she had no previous experience creating her own business. Even after she purchased her first batch of roses, she "didn't really know" what she was doing. Lynn's first step involved spontaneously buying150-200 small rose plants at a roadside nursery on her way home from a trip. While distributing flyers for her business at a farmers market, Lynn discovered that people in Montana "didn't know anything about growing these little roses," and she began to educate the community through a display garden and talking with customers. Lynn "loved talking about roses" and "loved sharing" the knowledge she had gained. Lynn described her approach to creating her business as "throwing off her hackles" followed by "balls to the walls." The uncertainty that Lynn shared at the beginning of her story evolved as she brought on stage her interactions with her customers. Through a dynamic social process, Lynn's uncertainty grew into a lively and powerful performance of *going for it.*

As Lynn started to imagine what might be next in her career, threads of uncertainty reemerged:

> *I am not really sure. I am just starting out. I have no idea where my career is going. I haven't been out in the working world for long, because I was a stay-at-home mom.*

Although Lynn sounded like she had some trepidation about developing her next career, she may also have been simply describing her situation of being in new and unknown territory. It is also possible that considering the constraints that many women experience when they seek full-time work and new careers following their previous

[24] Act II: Lynn is a 48-year-old graduate student in psychology.

career at home with children, that Lynn's narratives of a professional career and mom career are unable to meet in the middle, much less overlap. Lynn's expression of uncertainty at this moment followed her rich, dynamic tale of her part-time rose business. Lynn had also just noted that through her contact with her rose customers, she discovered she wanted to "reach people through gardening," which then influenced her decision to go back to school. She is currently a full-time student in a masters-level psychology program. When Lynn expressed her uncertainty, was she grasping for a way to make sense of the binary of being a mom and having a career? Whereas she was previously primarily identified as a mom, and her rose business was secondary, does her rose business "not count" as she imagines what is next, even though she could draw connections between her customer relations and her passion for psychology. Or is Lynn's uncertainty simply a pause as she imagines her future, and she has not yet worked out all the details?

Farther into her performance, Lynn again expressed similar sentiments of uncertainty, but this time she included the words *fun* and *scary* in her description:

> *To me it is like a puzzle. I have no idea what the bigger picture looks like. I find it fun and scary. I like sitting around and doing this with other people. Talking about what our next moves will be and really dreaming.*

Lynn extended "fun and scary" to include sharing this experience with others. Again, similar to the story she shared about creating her rose business, as Lynn's uncertainty evolved, she brought on stage other people who played a part in this process. As more people became involved, Lynn's "not knowing" about her future career turned into a shared adventure. Lynn was intertwining her career explorations with her relationships, and this served to assure that her career exploration could be "fun" in addition to being "scary."

When Katelyn,[25] Lynn's careering partner, began her performance, she expressed "not knowing" which story she should use. Expanding on this, she shared:

> *I have never had, like a job, you know. I don't know which story because I want to be so many things, like, that are so random*.

Notably, Lynn immediately offered Katelyn another way to begin that included uncertainty as part of an ordinary process for the career seeker:

> *There are very few of us in life that know. Most of us just kind of have a sense*.

After Katelyn explored multiple career interests and shared an engaging story about how she was able to earn and save enough money to go on a trip by herself to visit her brother in Canada, she concluded her performance by again expressing uncertainty:

[25] Act II: Katelyn is 12 years old and a student in middle school.

I don't know what I want to do for sure at all.

Lynn again responded by suggesting that not knowing about one's future career is common. This time, Lynn used a metaphor:

> *When you get to the airport, and everyone is looking at the monitors and seeing what you are suppose to be doing, everyone seems to know where they are going except you. And it's not true. Nobody really knows where they are going*.

Katelyn built on Lynn's metaphor by drawing on her own experiences of being out in the world and not knowing exactly where she is going:

> *I like that feeling where you are kind of insecure, but you have to make a decision fast. I like that. When I am downtown, you know, like by myself or with my friends, and you don't really know where you are supposed to be. They said meet here, but I don't really see it. I just walk this way. It's fun.*

As Lynn and Katelyn interacted around their uncertainty, they co-constructed an adventurous narrative while appearing to become braver through this process. Their experience of uncertainty shifted into an adventure. Margaret Wheatley (2002), an organizational consultant, describes this shift as healing: "Talking to one another heals our divisions and makes us brave again. We rediscover one another and out great human capacities" (p. 11).

When Katelyn and Lynn began their group reflection, they revisited their shared sentiments of uncertainty:

> *K: It was hard to know what you expected.*
> *L: It is hard to know if you hit on anything.*
> *K: I don't know if I said anything important.*

As the three of us explored Katelyn and Lynn's careering stories, an uplifted performance emerged wherein the three of us constructed a relational form of confidence, drawing this performance to a close.

> *K. (Speaking about playing her cello): If I am with someone that is really supportive and nice and they don't pressure me, then I can do pretty good.*
> *L: You know, what you are talking about is someone giving you the space to be.*
> *Lisa: And they believe in you.*
> *L: It is a supportive space.*
> *K: And when you are confident you are happy!*
> *L: And you are creative and you express yourself more readily.*

Notably, throughout Claire[26] and Amy's[27] careering performance, they wove in and out of moments of uncertainty and confidence. Claire, who began the performance, first created a lively image of the two community fundraisers in which she was involved. When Amy asked to hear more about what Claire liked about doing the fundraisers, Claire's first response was,

> *I don't know.*

Next, Claire identified several aspects of the fundraiser that she enjoyed. When Amy asked her to reflect on the qualities that she has that made this possible, Claire danced back and forth, searching for the language to describe herself:

> *I guess it was helping with the first graders. I was adamant about helping. I made sure it was OK.. I guess, that was my persuasive personality. My, I don't know. My wanting. Whatever big word that is.*

Listening to Claire describe her qualities, I heard her, on the one hand, struggling to know how to speak about herself, but on the other hand, she spoke strongly and eloquently about being "adamant about helping" and recognized that she has a "persuasive personality". Claire's uncertainty, as expressed in her hesitation, was coupled with her ability to understand her strengths.

When Amy began her performance she did not know where to begin:

> *I am having a hard time coming up with something for mine. Maybe you can help me.*

Claire suggested that Amy "stop being an overprotective mother." Amy, similarly to Lynn, discussed above, had been primarily working at home as a mom. Initially, when she reflected on her experiences as a mom, Amy did not easily find a narrative that related to her pending career. Lynn also expressed uncertainty when she saw her situation as having been a mom and therefore not having been "out in the working world." Amy first responded to her daughters comment with laughter and then proceeded with her performance by first talking about meaningful experiences she had caregiving in her community. Expanding out from her central job as a mom, Amy started with a story that was relevant, familiar, and relational.

Amy's next story was about climbing 14,000 foot peaks with friends and family members, which was followed by her last story, about when she lived in Indonesia in her 20s and taught English. With each story that she shared, Amy successively became more

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[26] Act I/Scene IV: Claire is 15 years old and a freshman in high school.

[27] Act I/Scene IV: Amy is in her late 40s and has been a stay-at-home mom while also being involved in her community. Amy is exploring possible career directions for when she reenters the paid workforce.

adventurous. The thread Amy identified throughout all three stories was helping others, the same as Claire's theme.

When Amy concluded her performance, she revisited Claire's challenge "to stop being an overprotective mother" and agreed that Claire had a "good point" to include risktaking in the way she parents. Claire also decided that she wants to find ways to take more risks in developing her next career move. Amy became braver and less uncertain in the course of sharing her stories. Although Claire, her daughter, challenged her at the start in a manner that did not appear to be "supportive," interestingly, Amy discovered that her adventurous self was what she needed at home and in her career building process. Being a mom and being adventurous are often seen as separate discourses. In this careering performance, between this mother and daughter, they are joined together

Julia[28] talked about her experience of uncertainty about her ability to perform on the high school basketball team that she had recently joined. She was concerned that her team members were going to "make fun" of her and that she was not going to be good enough. Julia went as far as imagining that she might even get "kicked off the team" because of this. The summer before joining this basketball team, Julia was encouraged by her middle school principal and math teacher to participate in a summer basketball training camp. Julia recognized that if she had not talked to her teacher and principal, she would not have participated in this summer program, which helped her prepare to join the basketball team at the high school.

Julie described a path beginning with being "really nervous" playing high school basketball. By getting to know her coaches and teammates, and "making new friends," Julia became "very confident."

Julia also shared a particular challenge she faced when she first entered basketball camp:

> *I am Hispanic so I am a minority and everything. When I went to that very first mini camp I looked around and I was the only minority there.*

She went on to talk about how "scared" she was the first time she walked into the basketball camp. In addition, one of Julia's big concerns was that her "Mexican friends" would make fun of her for being involved in a sport and that she would lose those friendships. Julia concluded:

> *I got over that and they accepted it and now it is fine. And I guess I worried over nothing.*

For Julia and for many members of society who are in the minority, being able to access supportive relationships is particularly important. When I asked Julia how she was able to develop these important relationships, she described her process:

[28] Julia is 16 years old, Latina, and in her first year of high school.

I was just myself. And I got . . . you know . . . I made friends with a whole bunch of people that were easy and wild and out there—like, " I want to do that" and "me too, me too." I just want to be wild.

Julia described a performative avenue for becoming connected to her friends at school. She became aware of the people at school to whom she was drawn who had an "easy and wild" style and joined in. Julia made a note that this style is different than her parents', who "like to be quiet and watch TV."

In this example of Julia's social performative forays, a lively performance emerged of "becoming brave" through relationship. Julia discovered a wider performative range for herself that served her well in school and sports. In addition, Julia's teacher and principal encouraged her to participate in high school basketball by helping her imagine options for when she entered high school. This process over the course of one's life demonstrates the operative aspect of careering. From a traditional notion of career development, one could say that Julia is well adjusted, becoming culturally assimilated as a first generation immigrant, and developing skills for possible future networking. From the lens of careering, Julia's ability to expand her performative social range allows her to be better connected socially, and through these connections, Julia co-creates a range of social performances. It is *Julia-in-relationship* that bodes well for her in her future careers. In Julia's language, she believes that what is going to help her most significantly in her future is her ability to "communicate."

Careering: Invitations to Imagine

Imagination fills the world of children and their play. Woven into fantastical stories are hopes and dreams as well as creative pathways for solving life's dilemmas. Imaginary and neighborhood friends, parents, and teachers join on the wings of these stories, and at other times, more "serious matters" such as cleaning one's room or tying one's shoe take precedence. These serious matters, akin to work for adults, can also become a game or a playful interlude for children.

Although it may be true that as one ponders possible future careers or changes in a current one, these important life decisions demand a serious touch, the careering performances in this study at times have reminded me of a child's play in the way they elicit imaginative realms. In creating the research design for this study, I drew upon two aspects of Appreciative Inquiry:[29] storytelling and the positive question. I made this choice based on my own previous experience of sharing a story in an AI conference and being surprised by the number of ideas that were generated through this storytelling exercise. The women and girls in this study also generated ideas about their career building by sharing positive stories.

Upon reviewing the careering performances, I found that participants' imaginings were evident. Some were closer to a child's play and far into the future, whereas other participants were focused on their nearer future. As a reminder for the reader, participants

[29] Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational change method based on social constructionist principals discussed previously in chapters III and V.

were asked first to share a story with their careering partner about a high point that was related to school/work/community or home. It was then suggested that they reflect on their own qualities that contributed to their high point experiences. They were also asked to reflect on what else and who else contributed. The third and fourth questions, provided as suggested guidelines for the participants, were as follows:

- How do you imagine these qualities and this experience could be useful as a resource and direction for you as you engage the working world?
- Imagine a next small step that you will take to bring out these qualities more often in your life now.

These questions invited the participants to dream into their futures while also encouraging them to explore ways they could perform their imaginings in their current lives. Regarding their responses to this invitation, the emergence of imagination as a theme is not notable. Of interest for this study, however, are the relational and performative aspects of the participants' imaginings. Whereas I have highlighted career as a relational process throughout this study, the participant's imaginative moments are foregrounded here as part of their shared performances.

In the group closure, Johnna[30] shared,

> *I had a great insight. The last question starts with the word* imagine . . . *a next small step. The word* imagine *really stuck out for me. I think that is my next small step, to begin to imagine it. Sketching out all the steps.*

Johnna talked about wanting to create her own business. She shared that when she thinks about it she experiences fear. When Molly,[31] her careering partner, asked her to imagine her next small step, Johnna recognized what she was missing. She determined that she needed to "allow" herself to imagine and "play" by engaging a creative process she used to write papers in school. Molly responded enthusiastically, "Awesome. That is great!" By imagining, Johnna was able to discern her next move. An important aspect of this interchange involved Molly's affirmative feedback. She was excited about this moment with Johnna. K. Gergen (2012) describes a similar dance-like process:

> I believe it is also in relationships that we find our greatest source of passion for what we do. When others speak with excitement about what they do, we live that excitement vicariously. And when others respond to us with enthusiasm, we then carry their enthusiasm. Our activities are affirmed, and we find their place in a movement of significant consequence in the world. (p. 1)

Although the careering performances in this study capture a point in time, and we do not see into the participants' futures, I believe that being able to imagine a preferred future and cultivating the next step is consequential in itself. I often find this to be true

[30] Act III/Scene II - Johnna is 43 and a student in a master's psychology program. Her background is in business.

[31] Act III/Scene I - Molly is 17 years old, Caucasian, and a senior in high school.

with clients in my practice. Someone may come into therapy expressing frustration. With imagining and then engaging a small action, a dynamic, dance-like process begins.

Toward the end of my[32] performance with Julia[33], she asked me if I knew "a long time ago that I would be doing this sort of thing," referring to my work as a psychotherapist. I briefly shared with her my experience of listening to my mother's stories as a little girl and deciding at a young age to be a counselor. In the group closure, I shared being "inspired" by Julia joining an investment club at school and the fact that she found "numbers to be exciting." Investing has always intimidated me, but hearing about Julia's experience helped me imagine this as a possibility. Julia, in turn, shared that when she heard that I decided I wanted to be a counselor when I was 10 years old, she thought, "Wow . . . 10 years old!" Later she commented,

> *I bet you inspired lots of adults and stuff. You had many great ideas*.

I had not imagined when I was 10 that I was capable of inspiring an adult. Julia's comments about me as a 10-year-old girl expanded the intragenerational aspect of this careering performance. Lisa and Johnna pondered Julia's comments:

> *L: That is a really good point. People of all ages can inspire each other.*
> *J: Isn't it interesting. She was inspired by you when you were 10. You are inspired by her when she is in high school.*

A moment of inspiration being born out of a relational interaction strikes me as an important aspect of generating a wider range of possibilities for the career seeker. In the above example, Julia served as a source of inspiration for me. I also discovered that my younger self could inspire both Julia and me. Based on this example, it is easy to imagine that many people may have stories from different times in their lives, including childhood, that might serve as generative material for their career discovery process. Although it is difficult to predict what might inspire whom and to what ends, it is evident through out the careering performances that positive stories from all times of life can be useful for imagining and planning one's future work. Also, drawing on the interaction above, it is the *telling* of the story to another that fuels this rich, imaginative discovery process.

During the group reflections of Act I, Jackie[34] shared that Jenna[35] suggested she "should run for president." Jackie went on to say,

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[32] Act III/Scene II: Lisa is 46 years old, Caucasian, and the author of this study. I will speak in the first person.

[33] Act III/Scene II:Julia is 16 years old, Latina and is in her first year of high school.

[34] Act 1/Scene V: Jackie is 13 years old and is Caucasian. She is in 8th grade.

That is what I have always wanted to do too. Just go out there and do something.

By suggesting that Jackie should run for president, Jenna affirmed Jackie. Because we have yet to have a women president in the U.S., Jenna may also be imagining that Jackie will have opportunities in her generation that could include becoming president. It is hard to say if Jackie will become interested in a political career. One of the stories she did share involved organizing a protest with her peers against the Iraq war. In response to this story, Jenna commented,

That is cool! That is quite an accomplishment.

Later in her performance, Jackie discussed her dream of becoming a "rock star" and going to a music school for college. If she did become a rock star, Jackie said, she would use her money to "get her point across." She expressed wanting to help homeless people by building a "huge" house they could live in. She included in this scenario adopting all the old dogs and cats at the humane society. Jackie did not appear to have a shortage of dreams for her future. Jenna's expressed interest in Jackie's future, and encouragement for Jackie to "run for president" did appear to sit well with Jackie. She responded with,

She [Jenna] *seemed like the kind of woman that I will be when I grow up.*

Even though Jackie appeared to have a rich reservoir of ideas, meeting Jenna may have helped her imagine what she can *be* like when she is older. Jackie may have been able to see herself in Jenna, because at times during their performance, they seemed to mirror each other. Jenna talked about having "radical ideas," and Jackie talked about being a "risk taker." Later Jenna commented,

I appreciated being paired younger and older. It is nice to learn from the younger generation.

Jenna and Jackie joined together in their performance, generating a number of ideas for both of their futures. Jenna discovered that she wanted to involve a group of students in a planning process for the library she manages, and Jackie left with an imagined way that she can be in the future.

When Cassie[36] talked about her experiences playing trombone, she also explored a rich multigenerational tale about other musicians in her family. Her great grandfather was a jazz musician who taught Billy Strayhorn and other notable jazz musicians at that time.

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[35] Act 1/Scene V: Jenna was Jackie's careering partner. She is 52 years old, Caucasian, and a high school librarian.

[36] Act IV: Scene I: Cassie is in 7th grade. She is 13 years old and is Caucasian.

When Cassie began to share with Michelle[37] her future dream of becoming a professional musician, she expanded this idea to include having a recording studio. Cassie then took a slightly different turn as she imagined her future. In addition to being a musician, she also rides horses. Cassie's recording studio expanded to include having horses.

When Cassie imagined her next step, she explored how she could draw on her courage, which was one of the qualities that emerged earlier from her story she shared with Michelle. Cassie first decided that she wanted to focus on creating more opportunities to perform playing her trombone. Michelle joined her in this process:

M: Maybe it's looking for those opportunities to step forward.
C: Yeah!
M: And you have the courage to do it . . . the talent to do it.
C: I think that is definitely it.

Cassie then talked about drawing on her courage to ask her riding teacher if she could train one of the horses she had been watching since it had been born. Michelle checked in with her:

M: So that is another opportunity thing to use your courage?
C: Yeah.
M: Or is it courage?
C: Yeah, it is. That is neat.

Cassie imagined aspects of her future with Michelle, and together, they brought her dreams into the present by tapping into Cassie's courage. Although this study did not have a longitudinal aspect, I have had the opportunity to observe in my work as a therapist the value of introducing one's future dreams into the present. Without creating actual performative steps, one's future imaginings may be in danger of remaining untethered.

Jennifer Ekert (2002), a middle school teacher, conducted a study involving 20 high-achieving minority adolescent girls. Her research suggests that these girls were able to create ambitious narratives about their future careers, but they struggled to plan realistically. Part of the dilemma that these girls faced was that in order to maintain a narrative of future success, they needed to keep their dreams in the future. In the present, they were faced with multiple challenges that were difficult to overcome. Ekert argued that underprivileged adolescents are notably in need of help in order to contend successfully with these challenges and reach their goals.

In addition to believing in the cultivation one's imagination as an important generative resource for determining one's future, I am in agreement with Ekert (2002) that future dreams need to be combined with practical steps that help make these dreams a reality. From a careering perspective, I would describe this process as complementing

[37] Act IV/Scene I: Michelle is in her late 50s, Caucasian and a family psychotherapist.

narratives of future success with real-time, performative steps. The work of Richard Young and his colleagues (Young et al., 1996, 2002, 2006; Young & Valach, 2011) with adolescents and parents, reviewed in chapter III, also provides a relevant example of such actions. Their concepts of *joint action* and *project* are useful for conceptualizing how one's career process can be broken down into steps and constructed relationally. Although the studies by Young and his colleagues' focused on parents and their adolescents, the notion of joint actions and projects fits nicely with this discussion of ways to invite one's future imaginings into the present moment.

Molly[38] had a dream that she would be able to play on the "big stage" with different bands at a Zimbabwean music festival in which she was participating. When Molly drew her careering performance to a close, she reflected on how she could use her "enthusiasm," the quality that emerged from this story. She began with saying,

> *I guess to take a step back and be able to say, "Wow! I can really do this!" I have an idea that I am shy, and I am really not sure that I am shy. My excuse is "No, I am shy. I can't do that."*

Molly decided to focus on the following:

> *Knowing that I do have something to offer. Being able to put myself out there. Just using that memory* (of her performance) *as a resource to draw from.*

Next Molly expanded her future dream to include traveling in Zimbabwe and possibly going to college in South Africa. She described this as "blindly jumping into South Africa." Johnna,[39] her careering partner, noted that this sounded like a "line from a poem." Molly responded favorably with "Jumping into Africa! Yeah!" When Molly began to imagine her next small step, she first acknowledged for herself that she had applied to several colleges. Johnna then pointed out that one of Molly's strengths from her story was "knowing people and then knowing more people." Molly decided that she would contact a professor she had heard about at one of the colleges in South Africa to see if she could learn more about the music scene. Molly's dream and excitement about "jumping into Africa" are an important aspect of helping her imagine her future. By joining Molly's excitement with her imagined "next small step," she was able to define for herself her next project: learning about the "music scene" in South Africa.

Summary

Contained within the last three sections are examples of three identified themes—success, uncertainty and imagination—from the women and girls' careering

[38] Act III/Scene I: Molly is Caucasian, 17 years old, and a senior in high school.

[39] Act III/Scene I: Johnna is 43 and a student in a master's psychology program. Her background is in business.

performances of this study. These themes were examined by closely attending to relational engagements and improvisational moments, which are the two relational processes that are present through out the careering performances. Multiple relational touchstones were present through out the participants' stories supporting the notion that one's career is a relational process. When sharing their stories, the women and girls framed their experiences in a manner that highlighted these relational engagements. In addition, a relational stream was observable between the women and girls as they shared stories and listened to each other, talked back and forth exploring their thoughts and ideas, and expanded and refined their future imaginings.

Also apparent in this inquiry is that each of the themes served as a momentary resting spot for the women and girls. Transition from one theme, or place, to another seemed to occur as part of a social engagement, as evidenced within the participants' stories as well as in their careering performances. As these transitions occurred, the themes and relational processes emerged as coordinated actions, weaving in and out of each other. As I now reflect on the entirety of my observations of the careering performances, the image of what is known in Geology as a braided river comes to mind, providing significant contrast to the dogged metaphor of a career ladder. A braided river follows a path of variability where channels and currents join, separate, and even rejoin again. Similarly, the process of careering involves times of joining and then dropping off of success, uncertainty, and new imaginative realms. Shaping this dynamic process are our relational engagements.

In the next chapter, the definition of careering originally proposed in the introduction is reviewed in light of my findings from this study. I examine the relevance of careering as a concept in general and then propose suggested applications for its use.

Chapter VIII
Careering: Further Applications

Within the previous chapters of this dissertation, I have put forth a social constructionist-based term, *careering*, intending to challenge what other career theorists and I have determined to be the limited concept of career. I specifically set out to examine the notion of careering within the context of stories and shared performances by women and girls. Given that the concept of career is historically based primarily on the experiences of privileged white men, new interpretations of career are particularly important for women and girls. Although work and careers have evolved since the turn of the century, and women's work possibilities have expanded, a gendered lens continues to shape how we see work. Including paid and unpaid obligations, women continue to be primary in terms of caregiving and relational matters, and men predominantly reside within the economic and public spheres of society. Although one could argue that many men are involved in their families' care and that many women are primarily breadwinners, work and relationship essentially remain in separate spheres. Although I speculate that the notion of careering is relevant for both women and men, I began this exploration by first examining this concept within women's experiences because of the particular challenges women face. Keeping this in mind, as I reflect on the many practical uses of careering in this chapter, I address its use for both men and women while slanting my attention towards women's experiences.

In this chapter, the definition of *careering* proposed in the introduction to this dissertation is discussed, reflecting on its relevance in regard to the findings of this study. The chapter then proceeds to present a consideration of the ways career practitioners such as psychotherapists, career counselors, and school counselors as well as places of employment might use the concept of careering. Next, I reflect on this careering study and share reflections about what I might have conducted differently, including thoughts for future research. Finally, the chapter concludes with general remarks about the concept of careering and the importance of generative approaches to work in today's world.

Careering Revisited and Revised

This study revealed that work and the process of constructing one's career contain extensive relational overtones. This phenomenon suggests a different picture from the familiar one of individual actors, on their own, making their way in the world. Although the career seeker may at times feel alone, in actuality, everything that is accomplished in this regard occurs as a part of a relational landscape.

Based on this reflection, does the following definition of careering as put forth in the introduction to this dissertation hold true?

- Approaching one's career as an ongoing process throughout one's life
- Multiple and flexible criteria for success
- A relational view of oneself as continuously being constructed throughout one's daily social interactions
- Small performative steps and engaged reflexivity with each move

As I reflect on the findings generated from this study in light of the careering definition proposed, what immediately stands out is that the relational aspect of careering is best positioned at the start of the definition. I reached this conclusion because I believe it is the relational aspect of careering that renders it a unique and useful term. In addition, I suggest changing "a relational view of oneself " to include "a relational view of oneself *and work*." Embracing a relational understanding of the worker and of all aspects of work, paid and unpaid, provides a more comprehensive framework with which to define careering. Although I have primarily focused on paid work that is considered career-like—in other words, progressive over time—I agree with Richardson (1993) and Bluestein (2006) that by segregating care and family-related work from one's career life, this aspect of one's life—primarily women's lives—remains hidden and irrelevant to one's career identity and place of employment. In my psychotherapy practice, I observe that separating relationship and work causes significant strain for my women clients. Notions such as "work-life balance" offer little to help these women make sense of the mutually exclusive demands inherent in relational life and work.

In order to make sense of the many facets of life at home and at work, the concepts built into careering may have something to offer. In the case of a client who is in her early 40s, for example, and has recently returned to school to pursue a degree in medicine, she approaches this endeavor as one important project[40] in her life. Her other project is spending time with her two elementary-age girls who are home for their summer vacation. Both parts of her life are important sources for creating meaning. She suggested that one of her primary motivations for creating a career had to do with providing more for her children in addition to pursuing her interest in medicine. Her partner has been frequently unemployed, and although this client receives a monthly payment from a family trust, these funds are leaving little extra to support her children's interests. She also looks forward to using her medical knowledge at home if her children become ill or are injured, and she believes that pursuing a career will provide good modeling for her two girls. Although this client has not adopted the use of the term *project*, she has begun to relate to the different aspects of her life in a "step-like" process, whereby she steadily knits together what matters to her. This approach has helped her feel less overwhelmed by the inherent conflict faced by many women who have primarily worked at home: the feeling that their career goals detract from being a mother.

Another example of careering that expands beyond the confines of one's professional pursuits involves a client who graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in engineering and was struggling to find employment. He was not satisfied with his career choice and decided to investigate teaching elementary school. After a short but significant love relationship with a man, he began to envision his future in a different manner. He decided that in the future, which he hoped would include a life partner and children, he wanted to provide for his family and foresaw that becoming a teacher could create a challenge for reaching this goal. He is now pursuing graduate school in

[40] By using the term *project*, I am drawing on the previously discussed work by Young and Valach (2011), in which they describe projects as socially constructed shorter-term goals that, over time, lead to careers.

engineering. This client is generating a possible path that will allow him to value both his relational and his working endeavors.

In these two clients' examples, it is not difficult to locate relational aspects of their careering processes. With the first client, she is inspired to be helpful by knowing how to attend to her children medically if needed, and she also envisions providing added opportunities for her children's growth in their future. Because both of her girls want to learn to play basketball, her first project in this regard is to install a basketball hoop and pave their driveway. Another relational consideration for this client is that she wants to be a positive role model for her girls by engaging in a professional career. In addition, her social connections at school have provided her with a wider range of performative possibilities, helping expand her identity. The second client generated a future dream by way of experiencing a powerful love with a man with whom he was able to imagine a future. Although the relationship did not continue, his dreams did. Both client examples offer a snapshot of careering wherein they are each weaving together potentially disparate parts of their lives. Each one, at times, has negotiated the meaning of success, periods of uncertainty, and the emergence of possible futures similarly to the participant's careering process in this study. I am again reminded of the image of a braided stream and the movements of shifting channels and currents.

The above examples and discoveries in this study prompt a revised version of careering suggested earlier:

- A relational view of oneself and work as continuously being constructed within one's daily social interactions
- Approaching one's career as an ongoing process throughout one's life
- Multiple and flexible criteria for success
- Small performative steps and engaged reflexivity with each move

In summary, careering is *relational, ongoing, flexible,* and *performative.* The next section delves into some practical applications for the concept of careering, beginning with the practice of psychotherapy.

Careering in Practice

The profession of psychotherapy encompasses wide-ranging theories and techniques. Many psychotherapists, including me, incorporate diverse theories and contrasting methods. The burning question in the therapy room for both therapist and client is often "What is going to be helpful?" As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, questions about work and direction as well as tensions surrounding multiple life roles appear often in the therapy process. Most psychotherapists have some training in the field of career, but typically, this involves one course that draws on traditional theories which have limitations, as previously discussed. I speculate that most psychotherapists view work as important but secondary to other concerns such as depression, relationship conflicts, or trauma. Although I also work with all the aforementioned issues, I frequently find that foregrounding work concerns helps alleviate, for example, a client's depressed state. I am reminded of a client who began our first session by yelling out that her depression was *because* she had been unemployed for 2 years. She emphatically stated that she was not actually depressed but was feeling

despair. She had attended one session with another psychotherapist who did suggest that she was depressed and that she might consider taking antidepressants. I suspect that the therapist's sidestepping this client's struggles to find employment left the client feeling like there was something *wrong with her*. Within the framework of careering, this client's struggles and "depression" are not unexpected and are "caused," in a sense, by the complex and challenging terrain she is crossing to secure employment. Introducing my client's work life to the center foreground of the therapeutic process recognizes work as a major component of their present, daily existence. In addition, this example highlights the language choices that I make with my clients and the fact that my use of language can either reinforce traditional forms of psychology and career thinking or open up our conversations to access generative and relational accounts.

Might the concept of careering help psychotherapists address the complexity of clients' lives and the multiple roles and stressors they face? I can begin answering this question by briefly reflecting on my psychotherapeutic practice and the ways I have evolved by becoming more attuned to the process of careering. Through the course of my research for this paper, I have found that I am more prepared to speak directly to my clients' challenges and resources as they craft their working lives. In the face of a relentlessly shaky economy, I am able to recognize my clients' careering processes and the inevitable twists and turns that occur. Although this may become a fun and interesting adventure for some clients, others, such as the one previously mentioned, understandably find themselves in a deep state of despair generated by her struggle with her career. One of the notable shifts that did result for this client during the course of our meetings was that she began to recognize the importance of her availability to her struggling teenage daughter during this time. She also secured contract work in her profession. These two changes helped reduce her level of despair.

Other changes I have noticed in my practice include being particularly aware of clients' attempts to renegotiate their ideas of success or recognize if they are waylaid in their experiences of uncertainty. Drawing on the relational processes that became evident in this study, I often encourage clients to engage a friend, a supportive colleague, a former boss, or a family member to join them in their careering process. I also participate in clients' discovery processes by helping them shape their future dreams and find tangible "next steps." This process foregrounds our interactions as one avenue for constructing sense while drawing forth my client's other relational connections, which helps expand their work and life options.

If I am correct in my assessment that my use of the concept of careering has strengthened my ability to assist my clients with their work and life-role struggles, might the concept of careering be of interest to other psychotherapists? In addition, could there be value in incorporating postmodern career theories and methods in graduate psychology programs so that more career practitioners are participating in postmodern theory building? I speculate that many psychotherapists would find useful the more general area of postmodern career approaches and, specifically, the concept of careering. Reflecting on the evolution of psychotherapy, the inclusion of a number of postmodern methods mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, such as narrative therapies, solution-focused therapy, and performative approaches, would indicate that applying postmodern approaches to clients' career and work processes is close at hand.

Returning to my findings in this study, I am keenly aware that many individuals may not be able to engage in a socially based careering process without guidance and support. I therefore envision the creation of different types of careering groups as a particularly apt format with which to practice this concept. Some possible examples of careering groups are (a) a small-class format in a high school, where students learn together about work possibilities; (b) college-based careering groups conducted by career services, such as a group design based on AI that is applicable for a college setting (Schutt, Jr., 2007), as discussed in chapter III; and (c) private groups conducted by psychotherapists for all ages including cross-generational groups, groups for women and/or girls, men and/or boys, and mixed-gender groups. The design used in this study could provide a jumping off point for the groups. The work of Lois Holzman and Fred Newman at the Eastside Institute, in the area of performative psychology mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation also comes to mind as a rich social learning model to utilize in the development of careering groups.

Drawing on the work of Young et al. (2006, 2011), providing groups for adolescents and their parents constitutes another relational approach for applying the concepts of careering. Keeping in mind the generative outcomes in this study for each generation, I suspect that both parents and adolescents could benefit from this type of experience. Also relevant here are the outcomes from the previously discussed study conducted by Young et al. (2006) regarding parent-adolescent career-related joint actions and projects. To review, the parent-adolescent dyads settled on projects that focused on different aspects of the parent-adolescent relationship. Some projects emphasized communication and relationship goals as primary, whereas others related to their relationship goals as a means to facilitate the adolescents' career and life goals. Opportunities for parents and adolescents to have meaningful conversations can be hard to come by in the course of daily life. I am reminded of a comment shared by Amy, a participant in this study, who was paired with her daughter:

> *It was great to have a chance to talk because even though we have a lot of teens around the house they are just talking to each other. It is nice to have a situation where you get to talk to them in this very open and positive way.*

Jordan, one of the younger participants, also noted the value of speaking with the women in the group:

> *I thought it was really cool that we had a chance to talk with people that are older than us. Usually we don't talk to people that are, like, older than us. You know, we talk to our friends.*

These comments and my observations lead me to believe that it is likely that careering groups for adolescents and their parents would both strengthen their relationships and provide career discovery processes. These words shared by Shawna, one of the women in the study, serve as a helpful reminder of the mutual benefits that can occur between generations:

> *It was so wonderful being with Ava. She has a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of exuberance in her expression. The ways that women, we, put our emotion into our speaking and include in our exclamations— we can get silenced and suppressed. It is so wonderful to be with Ava and remember that wisdom has a lot of exclamation to it. There isn't just one way that being smart has to sound and it was wonderful to be reminded of that.*

One last suggestion regarding an adolescent-parent group is to include intragenerational pairings with other group members in order to provide opportunities for group members learning from each other. I imagine, for example, an adult who might be a musician and a teen who might have a desire to have a musical career. Another possibility might be the presence of an adult or teen who is curious about the other member's way of being, and they therefore learn each other's performative style, as was the case with Shawna and Ava.

Careering and the Organization

As I reflect upon the concept of careering and how it might be of use in the workplace, I am reminded of Karl Weick's (1996) commentary on boundaryless careers, briefly alluded to in chapter III. Weick states that organizations "generate discontinuous episodes of growth, during which people organize to learn" (p. 54). He therefore proposes that an individual's career success is likely to be defined by a capacity to learn and reorganize, an ability to make sense of what is unknown, and a willingness to risk improvisational responses to organizational change. Weick paints a dynamic picture of the worker and the organization conjoined and evolving.

The findings in this study concur with Weick's (1996) observations while also adding a close-up relational view of "learning" and "improvisational" processes. In this study, it became apparent that careering includes local and relational constructions of success, moments of uncertainty, and imaginings of one's future self. The multiple shifts and changes occurred as part of a relational engagement. How might we use these findings to reflect upon career construction within organizations and the construction of organizations themselves?

Most observers would agree that historically rigid, hierarchical organizational structures are not the best approach for many types of companies. Technologically oriented businesses, in particular, have discovered that the combination of complex challenges and fast-paced change requires responsive and flexible organizational structures. One example of a method that aims to accomplish these goals is the Agile method, a popular organizational tool for software development companies (Lee, 2010). Most recently, the OpenAgile (ver. 1.1) method, based on similar principals is being used in a number of different types of companies. I mention OpenAgile here because I am struck by both its responsiveness to changing work environments and its relational underpinnings. One of OpenAgile's key components is the development of "truthful" communication (OpenAgile Institute, 2011, p. 3) and the creation of both a "learning system" and a "learning community" (p. 1). One function of the learning community is to create cross-functional teams in response to an unknown or challenging situation the

organization facing. The teams follow a four-step process—reflection, learning, planning, and action—known as the *learning circle model* (p. 6). In addition, four capacities—detachment, search, love, and courage—coincide with each step and serve to set the tone for the group interactions (p. 8). Although OpenAgile was not developed with constructionist principles in mind, it does serve as one possible example of a relationally oriented organizational method that that appears to have the capacity to be generative for both employees and the organization.[41]

The careering performances demonstrated that ones' relational interactions at work and elsewhere could serve as expansive sites for creating new forms of meaning. While undoubtedly not all relational interactions are positive or productive, with organizational methods such as OpenAgile, a work environment can be created that encourages fruitful interactions. Appreciative Inquiry (AI), discussed at some length in chapter III, offers an additional example of a generative and relationally based organizational method, which is also built on social constructionist principles. As more organizations accommodate methods that support employees' collaborative growth and learning, individuals are more likely to be supported in their dynamic careering process. The opportunity for employees to engage careering for periods of time within the same organization by collaboratively learning and incorporating multiple tasks outside of their prescribed responsibilities will likely help these individuals with their next career move. In addition, relationally oriented organizational methods offer a model whereby uncertainty is dealt with collectively, demonstrating that *not knowing* is an expected aspect of daily work processes. Addressing uncertainty by engaging one's relationships aligns with the findings in this study and strikes me as a critical skill for all employees and career builders. Although it is prudent not to overly tout the opportunities of radical social and economic change, new ways of envisioning organizations that may benefit all are worthy of reflection.

Reflections on Method and Further Research

One of the primary features of this study that contributes to the field of career theory and development is its focus on relational constructions of career. I situated this careering study within certain constraints in order to highlight what I and other career theorists consider to be in plain view yet rarely mentioned: working as a relational act. I have discussed at length what I believe to be informative outcomes from this study. In this section, I briefly reflect upon possible limitations that may have arisen as a result of

[41] The following is a brief example of using the OpenAgile method in an organization. A group of supervisors in a mining company were experiencing high levels of conflict and daily challenges in the areas of productivity and teamwork (OpenAgile Institute, 2011, p. 2). Their use of OpenAgile methodology helped these supervisors learn how to do each other's jobs and work collectively to solve problems. They no longer were arguing about how to accomplish their individual tasks but instead discovered how to enjoy their work in a coordinated and productive fashion. They also were able to produce tangible outcomes such as saving the company $10 million over a 6-month time period by changing the way they worked together. By applying an organizational structure that focused on learning and valuing employees' full range of possible contributions, a generative process emerged for these employees and also for this company as a whole.

the methods I employed in this study. I then suggest changes or additions to this study and provide reflections for further research.

To review, I set out to foreground the relational aspects of career building by initially constructing the notion of careering. Included in the definition of careering is the social constructionist understanding of the relational self (Gergen, 2009). Next, with the introduction of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) into my research design, positive storytelling was incorporated into the careering performances (Whitney et. al., 2000). Finally, the method chosen for the analysis, the Listening Guide*,* was established within the relational movement of psychology (Gilligan et al., 2003). As a researcher, I approached this study anticipating that I would observe relational processes during the careering performances and within the data. My intention to establish a relationally oriented inquiry is evident within all aspects of this study. By orienting myself as a researcher towards social constructions, in particular, relational careering constructions, I formed a certain type of study. Although the essential qualities were those discovered by participants themselves, in the end, these also were viewed a social performances.

By taking a strong social constructionist stance, I did not shore up the notion of the individual careerist. Although I have been clear about my intentions in doing so, I will say that for some, using language that is strongly individualist may be the most useful. Being able to say "I did this!" may serve as the best way to proceed. I do not see a conflict in supporting language that reinforces the "I" while utilizing social constructionists' methods; in other words, applying social constructionist views is not a rigid or prescribed approach but rather a responsive, recursive engagement. Jumping up and proudly exclaiming, "I can do it!" is, in itself, a wonderful social performance. The use of individualist-oriented language is one significant way that we make sense of our actions in the world.

Regarding the choice of positive storytelling as a component in the research design, I would like to note that this invited participants to share stories about work-related high points. Implicit in these directions is that participants not focus on their negative experiences—for example, times they may have felt discriminated against. My purpose in choosing positive stories was based on the AI principal of "positive image—positive action" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 10). I regard the term *positive* akin to using a flashlight in the nighttime; it is best to point it in the direction you want to go.

Although it is difficult to argue against a positive approach when considering one's future or even present career, I do want to point out that stories of struggle were not sought out in this research process. As discussed in chapter IV, I understand research as a constructionist process, and therefore, the construction of this careering research project was designed with a certain effect in mind. The positive stories served my intent to create a useful and relevant experience for the participants and introduce an element into the study that supported an exploration of careering. With that said, using a positive approach and thereby invoking positive performances in my research means that many of the participants' stories remain untold. If I had focused on stories of discrimination, a different type of project would have unfolded. Sharing stories of discrimination has served an important role in recognizing practices discriminating against women and people of color that at one time were deemed acceptable, as discussed in chapter II. I venture to guess that such stories could serve to generate positive attributes such as a

sense of strength resulting from facing challenges. It is also not difficult to imagine that for some, sharing stories about discrimination and other types of work-related struggles could lead to discouragement. Although significant changes have occurred for women in the paid work force, I believe in the necessity for continued research that documents and challenges discriminatory practices.

An additional note regarding the positive approach I employed in this careering study is a word of caution for practitioners who employ these types of methods. Because our use of language is notably shaped by binaries, a positive approach could be construed as the opposite of negative. I am reminded of the story I shared in the previous section about the client who had been unemployed for 2 years and was expressing significant despair. By affirming her struggle, she was better able to identify her direction and positive attributes, but if I had insisted on a certain conversation at the outset, this quite easily would have contributed to her difficult state. Discovering how to proceed in life can involve sharing the multifaceted stories of one's life.

Returning to the design of the study, I believe that some adjustments would have strengthened this research endeavor. First, incorporating a questionnaire for participants to fill out afterwards might have allowed for additional input. Although I did provide participants an opportunity to reflect on their participation in the careering groups, taking the time to reflect and write may have expanded their responses. Using a 3-month follow-up questionnaire also may have been helpful, particularly to see how participants may have followed up with their next steps. I have made note of these suggestions for when I develop careering groups as a way to increase participants' opportunities to provide feedback, which will allow me to adapt my methods effectively.

One final point regarding my use of the Listening Guide during my analysis is that one of the richest aspects of this method is the possibility of involving more than one researcher in the process of "listening." Including another researcher would have added a further relational dimension particularly relevant for this study. Because I was the only reader of the transcripts, the analysis is my listening as opposed to a collaborative and collective listening. Involving other researchers or even participants could have added a rich dimension that undoubtedly would have altered this constructive analysis.

Final Reflections on Careering

I have suggested practical applications for the concept of careering, such as noting therapy talk that opens doors and allows for local, relevant interpretations of career. In addition, I suggested the idea of careering groups for a variety of participant types such as high school and college students, parents and adolescents, and women and girls. Finally, I briefly considered how organizations might be responsive to individuals' careering processes and how this might be beneficial for all.

In conclusion, the concept of careering has been explored in this study by reflecting upon its theoretical and practical relevance for making sense of today's career. Arguably, shifting social, political, technological, and economic landscapes requires new ways of thinking about work. Based on my desire to address the particular challenges that women and girls continue to face in the unpaid and paid work force, I focused the lens of this study first on their experiences. Although this may be the case, I have also

considered careering to be relevant for all sectors of the population. It is evident that the concept of careering holds some promise as a jumping-off point for designing relationally based career-building methods for a variety of populations. Additionally, careering serves as a language tool offering new ways of conceptualizing one's working and relational life. In particular, the flexibility of careering supports the determination of one's work in a variety of ways while offering the possibility of meaning and dignity when one's career path takes unexpected twists and turns.

Finally, *careering* is a relational term and therefore addresses the longstanding absence of recognizing work as a relational act rather than an individual act. Recognizing paid work as a relational act additionally challenges the separation of work and love or relationship, setting the stage for care-oriented tasks at home and at work to become sources of esteem and meaning (Richardson, 2012). The crossover of these two disparate worlds—work and love—encourages alternative formulations for the work acts, paid and unpaid, that are valued in society. From this perspective, care work such as cooking a meal, helping one's elderly parent, or driving a neighbor to her doctor's appointment holds value. In turn, in places of employment working collaboratively with colleagues and discovering more effective solutions also holds value in contrast to the configuration of individual accomplishments. It remains my hope that relationships matter at work and at home and become recognized as the grounds from which we *become*. This scenario stands in contrast to the Western individualist notion of the self, separate, bounded, and competing in the work force.

Historically, working women have suffered most noticeably, as their careers often do not evolve as a traditional hierarchical trajectory. With today's economy, we now might agree that most members of society are subjected to significant levels of uncertainty and therefore are required to make changes in their approach to work in order to stay afloat. This is especially true for those who are part of the middle and working classes. Bluestein (2010) recently proposed a *relational theory of working* as a theoretical statement intending to establish a framework by which to recognize all types of work within a relational context. Bluestein's point regarding the necessity of a foundation for 21st-century work "that is inherently integrative, inclusive, and affirming of cultural and economic differences" is well taken (p. 15). The "opportunity" and therefore sense of choice that some members of society may find during times of great change is more accessible to individuals with access to some means. This is does not preclude the fact that countless men and women of varying backgrounds have accomplished incredible feats in the face of adversity, but when it remains a struggle to pay the rent or feed one's children, a sense of choice may be hard to come by.

The world at the time of this writing only continues to tilt in unpredictable directions. Daily, in the news, we hear that one country or another is faced with social and economic demise. A vast amount of uncertainty exists on the international economic front, and we know more than ever before that we are all tied together through our financial institutions, our natural environment, and our relationships, which, for many of us, span across the globe. Resourceful and creative thinking regarding the topic of work is very much in need as we proceed with the 21st century. The necessity of paid work remains salient for the majority of members of society, even the relatively wealthy. Research that addresses the macro and micro levels of work will continue to be necessary

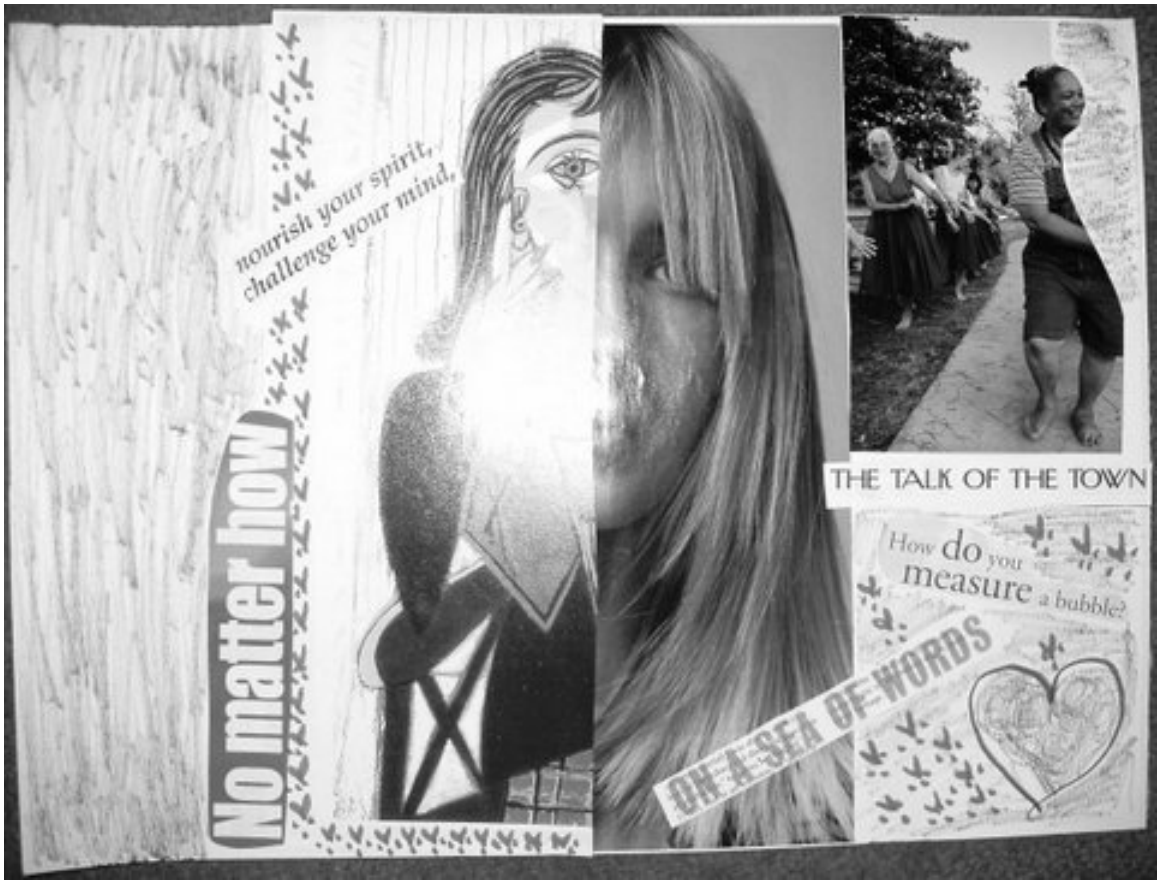
in order to make sense of these vast changes. It is my hope that this research endeavor on careering offers a small contribution that informs this burgeoning societal concern.

The outcomes of this study on careering suggest the value that can be found in further examining how a relational and constructionist perspective serves us in all of our work and career endeavors. Based on these reflections, there is merit in continued research that examines career construction within a relational framework. Whereas the field of career theory remains aligned with practice, discussions of future research endeavors point to the importance of discovering meaningful ways to proceed that consider all segments of society and types of work.

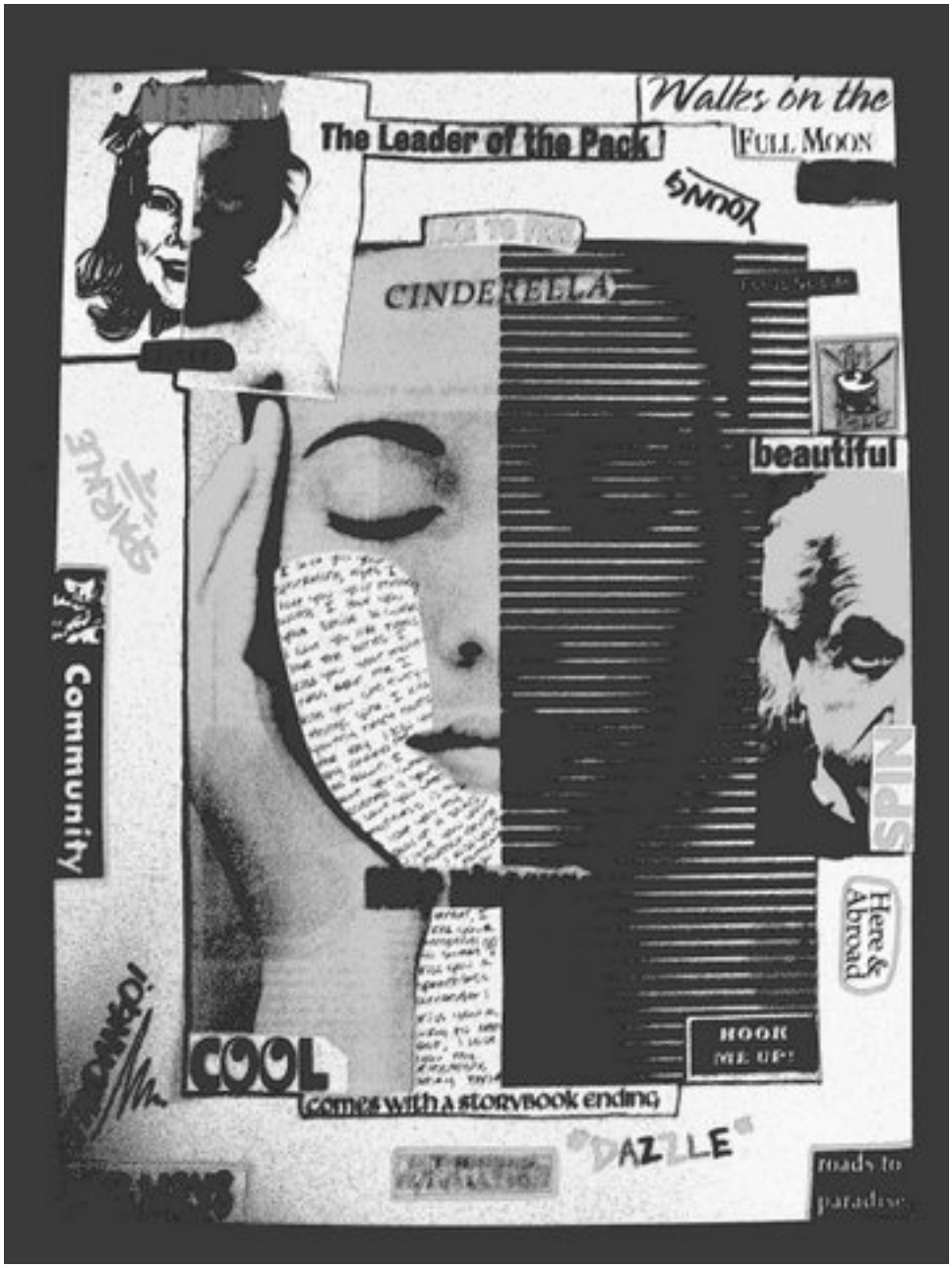
Appendix A
Participants' Collages

Jordan

Jessica


nourish your spirit,
challenge your mind,
No matter how
THE TALK OF THE TOWN
How do you measure a bubble?
ONE SEA OF WORDS

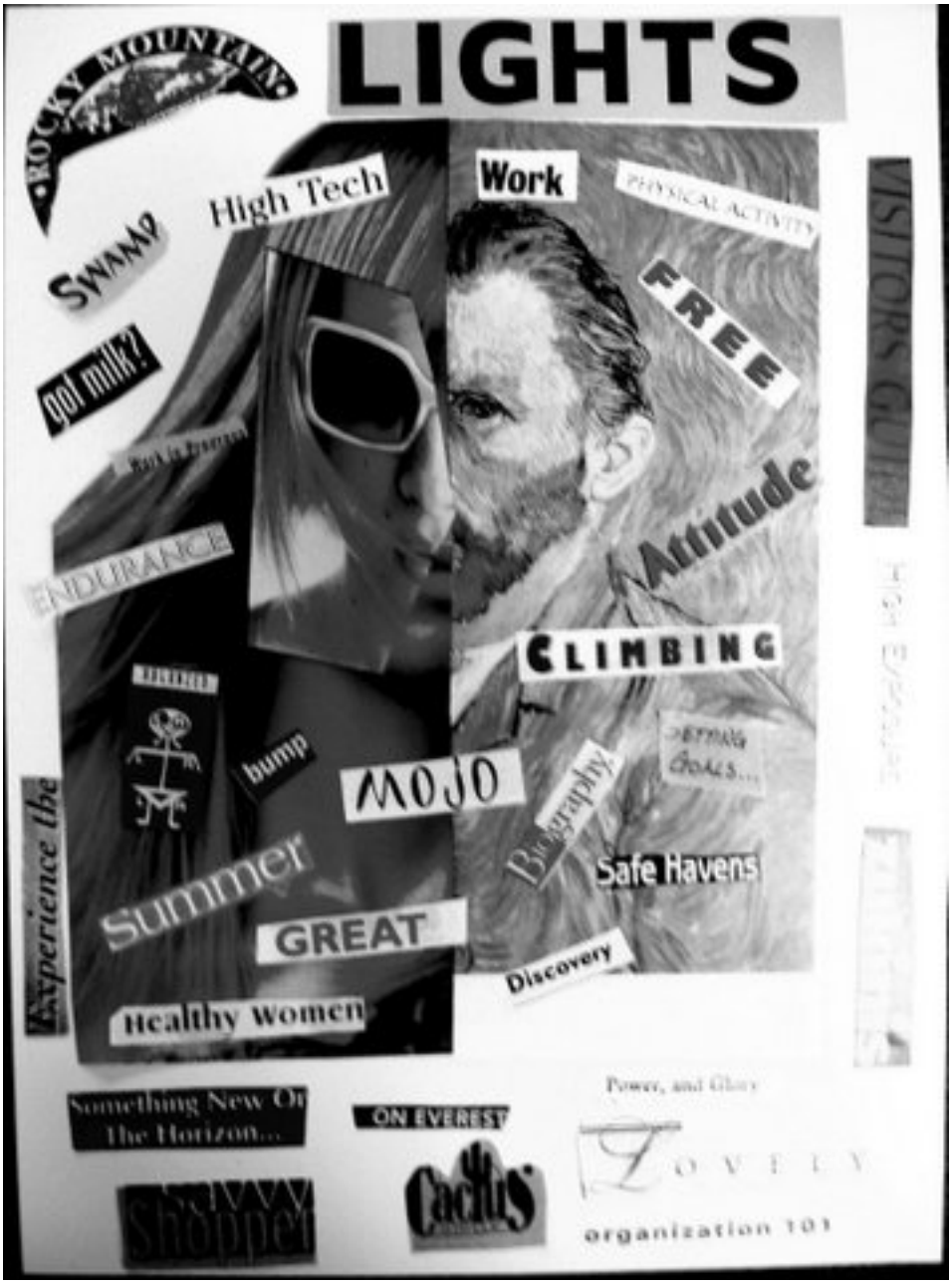
Ava


Walks on the
Full Moon
The Leader of the Pack
CINDERELLA
beautiful
Community
SPIN
Here & Abroad
COOL
comes with a storybook ending
HOOK ME UP!
"DAZZLE"
roads to paradise

Shawna


PLEASE
Best Friend
NSIDE
Things look different here.
Startling
funny
Let's talk
Guide to Opening
It's About
Trust
PEOPLE & CULTURES
PLENTY
OPENING
MORE
DOORS
FOR
MORE
PEOPLE
Different by Design
looking
Forward
TO
Challenge
This collection is
Rare
Viewing

Alexis


LIGHTS
ROCKY MOUNTAIN
High Tech
Work
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
SWAMP
got milk?
FREE
Attitude
ENDURANCE
CLIMBING
bump
MOJO
Biography
Safe Havens
Experience the
Summer
GREAT
Discovery
Healthy Women
Something New On The Horizon...
ON EVEREST
Cactus
Power, and Glory
LOVELY
organization 101

Sue


Words of Thanks
Just another way
Living Sculpture
Step Into
Dance
MAGICAL
Porch Appeal
Handmade &
Handprinted
A LEAP OF
From Ordinary to
Extraordinary
SPIN THE WEB
Looking Beyond

Claire


colors of the rainbow
everything
MAXIMIZE
HIGH EXPOSURE
PURE
APPETITES
THE CASTLE YONDER
the Heroes
Dream
Glitter
The Moon
the Dark Horse
Fabulous
SO
the world
A LEAP
THE BEST
Dazzling
Blooming into something extraordinary
THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Stories
Relax your life
CROSSROADS
Many
THE NIGHT
ATTENTION
PERFORMANCE
SHINE
pure pleasure
WINGSPAN
Imagine
Dandelion
Did You Know?
identities
NOW
The ultimate
MIRACLES
You Deserve The Be
it's the big easy

Amy


AND LIFE ON TOP
to go
Indulge Your Senses, Soothe Your Body and Soul
Wild Side
learned today?
Don't you wish
Be positive. Value Self, Others
Treat Yourself
AT YOUR SERVICE
GREATER SELF CONNECTION!
RESPECT
Climb Mountains
around the world

Jackie


It's About a landscape
Happy Wanderers
Leader of
Rare SUNFLOWER
had
It's as much about
The Best Birth
the journey
discovery.
Making the Idea
FREE TO
MIND!
frustrated
and run away
Shakespeare
ROCK 'N' RAP
It's About People!
glimmering
all the bells
and whistles...
THE LIGHTHOUSE
Hangouts
Garden Party
Neighbor
NEWS
puts
Tips On
identity is everything
A Beautiful Body!
TIME
radio
TRAVEL
Reflections on
JUST $1
OUTRAGEOUS
grow
Places
STATE OF
LONE STAR
STEAKHOUSE
SALOON
of Spaces
OF THE WORLD
How come you always
Work
Matching

Jenna


Unlimited
PERFORMANCE
Where is
PARADISE?
the #1 information source
Dream
Meet Your Need
A LEAP OF
I wish

Appendix B

Social Construction:
Vistas in Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology

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Social Construction: Vistas in Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology

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Penn State University

Lisa Sydow
The Taos Institute

We explore here the potentials of a social constructionist orientation to knowledge for research and clinical practice. Dialogues on social construction emphasize the communal origins of knowledge. They stress the cultural basis of knowledge claims, the significance of language, the value saturation of all knowledge, and the significance of relationships as opposed to individuals. An initial illustration of constructionism in action centers on adolescent risk behavior. Such behavior is often constructed negatively within popular writings and the social science and thus ignores the meaning of such actions to the adolescents themselves. Discourse analysis indicates that for adolescents risky behavior serves important functions of enhancing group solidarity and establishing positive identity. A second illustration, exploring the implications of constructionism for therapy, places a strong emphasis on the therapist as a collaborator in the building of meaning. Traditional investments in diagnosis and treatment are replaced with the collaborative creation of new possibilities for action.

A remarkable sea-change is taking place within the scholarly and therapeutic community. In an important sense, such change springs from growing doubt in universalized conceptions of truth, objectivity, rationality, and moral principle. There are many names for this revolution in thought and practice. Terms such as *postfoundationalism, postempiricism, poststructuralism, postEnlightenment,* and *postmodernism* are often among them. Some speak of a "linguistic turn," others of a "cultural turn" or an "interpretive turn." Yet, many of the central ideas move about an orbit usefully characterized as social constructionist. In this sense, social constructionism is not a singular and unified theory (K. Gergen, 1999). Rather, it is better seen as an unfolding dialogue among scholars and practitioners who vary considerably in their logics, values, and visions. Although there is substantial sharing, there is no single slate of assumptions to which all would adhere. Indeed, to establish a final truth, a foundational logic, a code of values, or a slate of practices would be antithetical to the very unfolding of understanding championed by the movement. Across the social sciences, constructionist thought has given rise to a watershed of new ideas, methodologies, and vistas of inquiry. Artificial barriers among disciplines are giving way, and a plethora of new, interdisciplinary journals and organizations has come into being. Although more slowly entering the field of psychology, constructionist ideas have flourished in the psychology of women (e.g., Bohan & Russell, 1999; M. Gergen & Davis, 1997), narrative psychology (Sarbin, 1984), life-span development (Gubrium, Holstein, & Buckholdt, 1994; Labouvie-Vief, Orwoll, & Manion, 1995), the psychology of aging (Hazan, 1994), theoretical psychology (see especially the journal *Theory and Psychology*), and cultural psychology (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Valsiner, 2000). On the methodological side, constructionist ideas have played a pivotal role in the development of qualitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001), discourse analysis (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001), narrative methods (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999), and participatory action methodology (Reason & Brad-

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bury, 2000). In clinical psychology we have also seen increasing acceptance of constructionist-informed practices of narrative therapy (Nelson, 2001; Schafer, 1992), brief therapy, and possibility therapy, to which we shall return later. For an overview of these developments in psychology, see K. Gergen (2001).

Our hope in this article is to bring constructionist ideas into connection with current undertakings in clinical child and adolescent psychology. Although an estimable tradition of research has been achieved in this domain, there is also space to reflect on limits and expansions. In particular, what new possibilities are now on the horizon; where might they take us; how might we and those we serve be further advantaged? This discussion is not to suggest an abandonment of existing tradition. Rather, the goal is vitalization and enrichment. By shifting the lens of understanding, the possibility for new theory, methods, and clinical practice is enhanced.

To these ends, we first sketch out a series of assumptions shared by many engaged in constructionist explorations. After describing some of central ideas, we offer two illustrations relevant to issues treated in this journal. The first, reported by Cynthia Lightfoot, is from the domain of adolescent research. The second illustration is provided by Lisa Sydow, in which she deliberates on her clinical practice with adolescents. We then return to the broader implications for inquiry and practice in clinical child and adolescent psychology.

The Social Construction of Knowledge

There are many ways to tell the story of social constructionism. Some would trace its history to the works of Nietzsche, Goethe, or Vico. Others would emphasize more recent developments in the sociology of knowledge or the history of science. And still others would focus on the growing consciousness of global variations in peoples' interpretations of the world, their logics and values. Each of these accounts would, indeed, construct constructionism in a different way, each useful in a different context. For our purposes, however, we briefly describe a number of the most widely shared arguments and proposals in circulation (for a more detailed account, see K. Gergen 1994, 1999). We have selected four particular themes because they are simultaneously among the most unsettling and profoundly liberating. Later we consider some of the implications of these ideas in research and practice.

The Social Origins of Knowledge

Perhaps the most generative idea emerging from the constructionist dialogues is that what we take to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in human relationships. What we take to be true as opposed to false, objective as opposed to subjective, scientific as opposed to mythological, rational as opposed to irrational, personal as opposed to social, moral as opposed to immoral is brought into being by historically and culturally situated groups of people. This view stands in dramatic contrast to two of the most important intellectual and cultural traditions typically associated with the West. First is the tradition of the individual knower, the rational, self-directing, morally centered, and knowledgeable agent of action. The constructionist dialogues challenge the notion of the primacy of the individual in the knowing process and invite an appreciation of relationship as central to human action and well-being. It is not the individual mind in which knowledge, reason, emotion, and morality reside, but in relationships. Indeed, recent work in cultural psychology and anthropology suggests that many cultures do not distinguish between personal autonomy and the common good—two conceptions that are typically antithetical in Western thought and tradition (Chisholm, 1996; Rogoff, 2003).

Second, the communal view of knowledge presents a major challenge to the view of a universal Truth that can be discovered or revealed through the actions and accounts of scientists, or any other group. In effect, propose the constructionists, what we take to be real and true is not *found* in nature but rather created in the course of participating within particular communities of practice. Physics and chemistry generate useful truths from within their communal traditions, just as psychologists, sociologists, novelists, and priests do from within theirs. From these often-competing traditions we cannot locate a transcendent truth, a "truly true." Any attempt to determine the superior account would itself be the outcome of a given community of agreement.

To be sure, these arguments have provoked strong and sometimes angry reactions among scientific communities in particular. Many scientists have devoted a lifetime to pursuing what they believe to be objective knowledge and despair of the unverifiable myths, credos, and folk beliefs by which common people lead their lives. Under these conditions it is difficult to seriously entertain the possibility that science is itself a social construction and not intrinsically superior to other traditions. Yet, in our view such anguish is based on a misreading of the constructionist message. Western medical science, for example, does indeed offer useful truths; most of us would scarcely wish to abandon them. However, these truths are based on an enormous array of culturally and historically specific constructions, for example, about what constitutes an impairment, health and illness, life and death, the boundaries of the body, the nature of pain, and so on. When these assumptions are treated as natural and universal—true

for all cultures and times—alternative conceptions are undermined and destroyed. To understand death, for example, as merely the termination of biological functioning would be an enormous impoverishment of human existence. The point is not to abandon medical science, but to understand it as a cultural tradition—one among many.

In this manner, social constructionism serves an enormous liberating function. It removes the rhetorical power of anyone or any group claiming truth, wisdom, or ethics of universal scope, necessary for all. In contrast, for most constructionists, all voices may justifiably contribute to the dialogues on which our futures depend. At the same time, to understand all knowledge claims as socially constructed is not to render them false or insignificant. Again, it is to recognize that each tradition, although limited, may offer us options for living. In this way, constructionism invites a posture of infinite curiosity, whereby every tradition may offer us riches, and new amalgams stand ever open to development. When we recognize that the realities of today depend on the agreements of today, we confront enormous possibilities. We are not destined to repeat the past; with collaborative innovation, new futures are born.

The Centrality of Language

Highly congenial with the view of knowledge as social in origin is the constructionist focus on written and spoken language. Language is perhaps the most important resource available for creating and sustaining meaning in relationships (Capps & Ochs, 1995; Nelson, 2001; Sinha & Jensen-de-Lopez, 2000). Not only do our words represent our agreements regarding what exists, what is rational, and what is good, they essentially constitute the glue by which our very forms of life—or traditions—are held together. What sense is there in a jury trial without a language of guilt and innocence; how could a love affair be conducted without words (or other signals) of endearment? By the same token, the readership of this journal is linked by a shared language of "the child," "the adolescent," "mental processes," and so on. We live by and through our languages.

For constructionists, this focus on the linguistic construction of reality has three important outcomes. First, we gain an appreciation of diverse views of the real and the good. Rather than striving for "one world" (e.g., Western, scientific, materialist), we come to understand the importance we must grant to alternative traditions of knowledge. We come to realize that our world of psychological research is fully legitimate within itself, but that we cannot assume its functionality within other traditions. Second, we begin to appreciate the importance of reflexive assessment of our own constructions. We cease to ask whether our research is True (in all worlds), and begin to ask about the utility and shortcomings of "our way of putting things" when shared outside our own community. Finally, the emphasis on language brings us to the realization that together we can create new realities. Our theories of child and adolescent behavior are not driven by observation. As we develop new concepts or theories, so do we open new vistas of research and practice.

The Politics of Knowledge

As these latter points suggest, social constructionism shares much with a pragmatic view of knowledge. That is, traditional issues of transcendent truth and objectivity are replaced with concerns with practical outcomes. It is not whether an account is true from a "god's eye view" that matters; rather we ask about the results for our lives that follow from taking any truth claim seriously. There can be many truths, depending on community tradition, but as the constructionist asks, what happens to us—for good or ill—as we honor one as opposed to another account? At the same time, issues of good and ill are matters of political and moral significance. Our work must ultimately be appraised on these grounds.

Such a conclusion has had enormous repercussions in the academic community and beyond. This is so especially for scholars and practitioners concerned with social injustice, oppression, and the marginalization of minority groups in society. If communities create realities (facts and good reasons) congenial to their own traditions, and these realities are established as true and good for all, then alternative traditions may be obliterated. Regardless of whether we are speaking of scientific fact, canons of logic, foundations of law, or spiritual truths, as we formulate the world we implicitly favor certain ways of life over others. Thus, for example, the scientist may use the most rigorous methods of testing intelligence and amass tomes of data that indicate racial differences in intelligence. However, to presume that there is something called "human intelligence," that people differ in their possession of this capacity, and that a series of question-and-answer games reveal this capacity is all specific to a given tradition or paradigm. Such concepts and measures are not required by "the way the world is." Most important, merely entering the paradigm and moving within the tradition is deeply injurious to those people classified as inferior by its standards.

These concerns not only invite reflexivity regarding our theories, methods, and practices. They also invite the discipline into dialogues with the communities we serve.

We are most effective and more fully moral, it may be said, when our realities, rationalities, and values in-

tersect with those we place under study or attempt to treat within therapy.

From Self to Relationship

Constructionist dialogues shift our attention from the individual actor to coordinated relationships. The drama here is substantial. Western culture has long been wedded to the view that individual actors form the basic atoms of social life. Each of us acts according to internal dictates of cognition, emotion, motivation, and so on. Each of us is responsible for his or her own actions. Yet, the vocabulary of individual minds is not required by the way the world is, nor is the belief in fundamental independence. The conception of human beings may vary dramatically across both culture and history, and even in Western culture the preeminent status of the individual self is of recent historical vintage (Lightfoot, 2003; Sass, 1992; Taylor, 1989).

To recognize the historical and cultural contingency of individualist beliefs opens the door to reflection. Should we settle for the tradition as it is, or is there reason to create new alternatives? As many argue, there is substantial dark side to constructing a world of individual agents. When we make a fundamental distinction between self and other, we create a world of distances: me here and you there. We come to understand ourselves as basically alone and alienated. We come to prize autonomy—becoming a "self-made man" who "does it my way." To understand the world as constituted by separate individuals is also to court distrust; after all, one never has access to the private thoughts of others. And if alienated and distrustful, what is more appropriate than "taking care of number one?" Self-gain becomes an unmitigated virtue—indeed, for the economist, the unavoidable basis for the rational calculus that guides our actions. With such understanding prominent, loyalty, commitment, and community are all thrown into question, as all may potentially interfere with "self-realization." Such are the views that now circulate widely through the scholarly world (see, for example, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Sampson, 1993).

We may not wish to abandon tradition of individual selves, but constructionism invites us to explore and create alternatives. In particular, theorists increasingly ask, is it possible to construct an account of human action in which relationship rather than self is fundamental? Movement in this direction is now gaining momentum in many quarters and new practices simultaneously emerging. On the conceptual level, psychologists from many different perspectives are attempting to articulate a vision of a relational self. For example, as psychoanalytic theory has shifted toward object relations, therapists have become increasingly concerned with the complex relations between transference and countertransference. From this vantage point the therapist's psychological functioning cannot be extricated from that of the client (Mitchell, 1993). From a separate quarter, many developmental theorists and educators are elaborating on the implications of Vygotsky's early view that individual thought is lodged in cultural (see Valsiner, 1988, for a historical review). From this perspective there are no strictly independent thought processes, as all such processes are fashioned within particular cultural settings (e.g., Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Valsiner, 2000). Stimulated by these developments, cultural psychologists now explore forms of thought and emotion indigenous to particular peoples. Discursively oriented psychologists add further dimension to relational theory by relocating so-called *mental phenomena* within patterns of discursive exchange. We begin to see the possibilities of communal, as opposed to individual memory (Middleton & Edwards, 1990), attitudes as positions taken within an argument, (Potter & Weatherall, 1987), and repression as an outcome of circumscribed conversation (Billig, 1987).

These four themes—centering on the social construction of the real and the good, the pivotal function of language in creating intelligible worlds, the political and pragmatic nature of discourse, and the significance of relational process as opposed to individual minds—have rippled across the academic disciplines and throughout many domains of human practice. To be sure, they are also properly controversial. The interested reader may wish to explore the various critiques and their rejoinders (Parusnikova, 1992; Schwalbe, 1993; Shalin 1993; Smith, 1994). However, such ideas also possess enormous potential. They have the capacity to reduce orders of oppression, broaden the dialogues of human interchange, sharpen sensitivity to the limits of our research traditions and to their potential offerings, and incite the collaborative creation of new intelligibilities and practices. In what follows, we offer two small illustrations of constructionist ideas in action, the first from research on adolescent risk and the second from the clinical treatment of adolescent problems.

The Cultural Framing of Youth

Over the past decade, a "youth crisis" has fired the imaginations of the national press and the public. Young people, as we are told, have never been more reckless, depressed, apathetic, suicidal, violent, poorly educated, prematurely pregnant, marginalized, and medicated. What accounts for this arresting state of affairs? A legion of studies has been marshaled to rout out the blameworthy. Among the principal perpetrators are broken families, chaotic neighborhoods, declining religiosity, eroding social controls, drugs, peer-group

exclusion, violent television, violent music, inattentive parents, and boredom.

In this light it is interesting to consider the following characterization of youth, boys in particular (Mechling, 2001):

> Americans are worried about their boys. Large numbers of boys roam the streets without much adult supervision or even surveillance. They gather in peer groups and seem to flaunt adult values in their dress and speech. Large numbers of them are foreign-born. These male peer groups—gangs, really—engage too often in aggressive and violent behavior. … One sociologist's book, *The Boy Problem*, has labeled this the most challenging social problem for the generation. (p. xv)

These are the words with which Jay Mechling (2001) introduces his ethnographic study of Boy Scouts and the "making of American youth." They fall familiarly on the modern ear, but as Mechling tells us, they were used to describe American sentiment toward youth in the year 1900. It seems unlikely that it is simply the nature of boys—or the nature of youth, in general—to run amok at the turn of each new century. What then, accounts for the recurring vision of youth in crisis?

The question is particularly interesting in light of Males' (1999) review of popular and scholarly characterizations of youth in crisis. After examining recently available statistics on the problems of youth and comparing how youth problems have been depicted in the popular press, he concluded that youth have been "framed." That is, the problems of youth have been constructed for dramatic effect. Charles Acland (1995) concurred. Indeed, his analysis of the criminalization of youth suggests that youth have been maligned not just in the media, but by such organizations as the American Medical Association, which teamed up with the National Association of State Boards of Education to compose a report intended to bring the sorry state of adolescents to the attention of teachers and medical professionals.

The research community also contributes to the negative construction of youth. Funds are made available by government agencies and private foundations to support research that addresses the problems of youth, whereas little support can be found for examining positive and indeed more typical aspects of adolescent behavior and development. It has been pointed out that a researcher stands a better chance of getting tens of thousands of dollars to study youth purse-snatching than a fraction of this amount to study youth theater and dance groups—unless, of course, the groups are touted as preventing problem behavior (Lightfoot, 1999; Quinn, 1995). Once problem behavior has taken center stage, all manner of resources—time, money, journal space, and social programs—are devoted to identifying its causes, correlates, and consequences. The scholarly community may fault the popular press for its characterization, but its exclusive concentration on behavior *problems* inadvertently lends itself to negative stereotyping of youth.

The point we mean to make here is that what is taken to matter in the lives and behavior of youth is socially constructed according to particular purposes, projects, and points of view. The crisis of youth, as Acland (1995) suggested, is not a "real crisis" but a crisis from a particular perspective. Social constructionism invites us to explore how common understandings of youth are culturally constructed and their implications for and relations to other systems of meaning. Moreover, we may wish to explore and to generate alternative frames of constructing the issues.

The Relational Contexts of Adolescent Risk-Taking

In response to these challenges, researchers have set out to explore alternative constructions to the crisis-driven, problem-focused approach that typifies traditional studies of adolescent risk behavior. By and large, these recent efforts aim to understand the meanings of risk behavior as embedded and constructed in adolescents' developing relationships with friends, family, social institutions, culture, and history (Chandler, 2000, Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Lightfoot, 1997b). Drawing from the relational orientation favored by constructionism, we may see adolescent risk-taking not as an individual behavior but as emerging from a relational process. Interviews that we have conducted with adolescents are replete with examples of how socially shared adventures are embedded within interpersonal relationships: "[getting drunk] is a good excuse to fall all over that cute guy you really like"; "[skipping school] makes you closer because you feel like you've survived an ordeal together; you've beat the establishment together"; "[stealing a case of beer from a delivery truck] shows what lengths it takes to join a specific group"; "[taking LSD is] a way to relate—a different way of being close." In the eyes of adolescents, risk is worthwhile because of what is communicated to others by proceeding in spite of it (see Lightfoot, 1997b).

Of special significance to our research, we have come to see adolescent risk-taking functioning as a means of narrating the identity of those involved (Lightfoot, 1992, 1997a). In contrast to prevailing perspectives that view risk as a natural or mechanical consequence of preexisting causes (e.g., bad neighborhoods, busy parents), we focus on youth's orientation to risk as part of a dialogical process through which social identities are compendiously collected and positioned in relation to others (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003). Teenagers who together, night after night, organize their activities around taking amphetamines and

then vandalizing cars, defacing public property, or throwing rocks through storefront windows are both generating and sustaining a particular identity. Likewise, a group of teenagers that has developed a pattern of action that involves spending weekend nights drinking beer and smoking marijuana in the dugouts at the local baseball field are engaged in a symbolic, communicative process that demonstrates who they are. In both instances, we have a constellation of action that constitutes a declaration of identity. Risks and reputations are mutually affirming: Rednecks drink beer and fight; preppies snort coke and drive their cars too fast.

Risk-taking is thus an expressive form. It organizes action and experience and contributes to self-definition. Here is a dialogue demonstrating one group's awareness of how drug use had come to mediate their social relationships. They begin talking about the frequency of pot-smoking:

> Sometimes it's regular; sometimes it's not. Depends on who's there, who's with the group.
>
> We have differences of opinion sometimes, about who wants to, and who doesn't, and stuff like that.
>
> Yeah, it depends. Like if there's a lot of others who don't like it, then we'll just go somewhere. (i.e., they will slip discreetly away, smoke the pot, and then rejoin the others)
>
> Then they just don't do it.
>
> Yeah, but sometimes, often, it separates you.
>
> Yeah, I know it does.
>
> (Lightfoot, 1997a, p. 43)

Drug use is not the only identity marker for this group. Clothing style, music preferences, even patterns of interacting can be emblematic of group membership. Interestingly, identity markers can refer to each other. Tie-dye, hemp jewelry, and Led Zeppelin all come as a piece, and all declare one's drug involvement. When the teenagers in this particular group were asked to consider how they appeared to outsiders (peers, teachers, and parents), they reported frankly that others see a group of kids who spend a lot of time getting high:

> They think we're on drugs.
>
> Well, they know.
>
> They hear us talking in class.
>
> They probably hear a lot from other people, too.
>
> I don't think they think we have a real serious drug problem. I just think that because of the way we dress or what we do with other people that they think we use drugs.
>
> (Lightfoot, 1997a, p. 148)

In addition to standing as symbolic or emblematic markers of social identity, risk-taking provides material for storytelling. In this sense, the centrality of language is apparent at several levels. The use of language in the telling and retelling of risk and adventure promotes a sense of community, a sense of group history—of us and of them. Consider the following discussion of jamborees:

> Definitely brings us closer.
>
> We reminisce about it now.
>
> … the most embarrassing things …
>
> All of our new friends, like, feel so out of place because when anyone brings up a jamboree, we talk about it like we are in our own little world.
>
> A lot of people comment that we seem really close.
>
> That's true, how close we are. And because of that, because we always seem like we have fun, and because it's noticeable, we seem so close that people will assume that, "oh, they must not want us to talk to them."
>
> (Lightfoot, 1997a, p. 152)

A constructionist orientation to adolescent risk-taking invites an exploration of the shared meanings of risk behavior within adolescent subcultures. These meanings, in turn, are intimately linked to one's self-definition and to the ways of life shared and valued by the group. From this perspective, we see that moves toward eradication of "the problems" may be met with resistance. Society may be better served with a dialogic orientation bringing together the views of the various subcultures with those striving for a legally ordered society.

Let us move from the domain of research to the clinic.

In the next section Lisa Sydow, a practicing clinician, talks of her engagement with social constructionist ideas. This work is important because it illustrates how both theory and research in constructionism are reflected within ongoing practices.

Construction in the Clinic: Discovering Possibility

When I was 10 years old, I decided that I wanted to be a counselor when I grew up. I still remember the stories my mother told me at that time about her work as a nurse and how they transported me into a world of intense human interaction and purpose. There was something in the way that she spoke that moved me and sparked a curiosity. I began to develop a sense of the possible, and ultimately the possible became a reality: I am now a practicing therapist who works primarily with adolescent girls and their families.

Ten years ago I had the good fortune to encounter the theories of social constructionism through my studies, especially of solution-focused therapy (De Shazer, 1991; O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989). I felt a sense of wonder just as I did when I listened to my mother's stories as a young girl. A different world opened up for me, which now included a language of possibility. And this language, I came to see, functioned much as my mother's stories. My career owed its trajectory to these stories. This had exciting implications for my work as a psychotherapist. At this time I started meeting regularly with a group of colleagues, and through dialogue we questioned and explored the practical applications of social constructionism. The literature offered many contributions to our dialogue (Anderson, 1997; Epston & White, 1990; Foucault,1980; Friedman, 1993; Gilligan & Price, 1993; McNamee & K. Gergen, 1993). In a real sense, my clients also were participants in this dialogue, as my conversations with them were central in developing my thinking.

In this short space it would be too difficult to enumerate all that emerged from this dialogue. In brief, I found in these discussions a full reordering of my understanding of client problems, the process of therapy, and my role within it. Let me share some of the central ways in which my practice has been transformed:

As an orientation to knowledge, social constructionism does not rule out any theoretical viewpoint or form of practice. Rather, I am invited to see each orientation as a language of understanding and each practice as a form of life that may have important change potential. I am invited, then, to incorporate a wide range of theoretical perspectives, as they may prove useful, rather than having to limit myself to any single position. This kind of openness also makes me more curious about other positions and less defensive of what I do. I have found myself increasingly open, for example, to schools of thought such as feminist views of the relational self (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1993) and Buddhist psychology (Epstein, 1995; Podvoll, 1990). In this way, constructionist invites a sharing of knowledge and open dialogue on possibilities.

This is not to say that I lose my critical capacities. Rather, I am also invited to see the shortcomings of various theories and practices as well. My critique is enriched by the fact that I can see any given position from multiple standpoints. However, just because I can locate shortcomings of various kinds does not require giving up the position under scrutiny. Every position will have shortcomings through the lens of other standpoints. The important point is to be sensitive to these issues. As a therapist, this means that I am able to incorporate diverse practices as they seem appropriate and effective. What reflects a constructionist stance is not the particular form of practice I employ, but my willingness to question the currency assigned.

As an orientation to my clients, constructionism encourages this same openness. I view myself not as someone who is "treating" a person, with myself as the doctor and the client as the patient. Rather, I see us as working together in a dialogue. I don't assume that I know the right way or that there is even a right way. Another way of saying this is that I consistently engage in a collaborative process with my clients. This inherently implies a nonhierachical stance, in which we may both bring certain talents or contributions to the table. I find this approach especially useful with my adolescent clients in that psychotherapy becomes an act of shared responsibility. This creates a model for these girls and helps them to build skills for ways of participating in the creation of their lives outside.

Traditional therapy often centers on the psychological dynamics of the individual client—her emotions, thoughts, beliefs, anxieties, unconscious desires, and the like. Although constructionism does not disregard these concerns, they do take on a secondary role. In the constructionist context, I am invited to recognize the prominent role of relationships. If all meaning grows from relationships, then whatever meanings my client assigns to her inner world are reflections of a relational history. And it is important to explore the extent to which they are sustained by current engagements in relationship. I don't look to see if her words express the real extent of the anguish, for example, but what it means for the individual and her relationships by constructing herself in just this way. I am also sensitive to stories that contain collective elements, that is, a discourse of the "we." This often opens spaces for creating change.

Traditional therapy typically presumes that the client "has a problem" or is dysfunctional in some way. From this standpoint I am encouraged to use standard diagnostic categories. In contrast, from a constructionist standpoint, diagnostic categories are not reflections of fact. Rather, they represent ways of constructing the client, typically not from the client's point of view. To illustrate, my adolescent clients frequently talk about their feelings of hopelessness, of being "down" and unmotivated to do anything. I could easily classify them as depressed or bipolar and respond by seeking medication and providing cognitive therapy. I believe that this is an important and useful approach in some cases. But I have to ask myself in each case whether this kind of classification and pharmacological treatment is useful for the client. Often I don't think so, and I feel it is critical to explore alternatives.

Often the first question I might ask is "What is important to you in your life?" This sets the stage for our discussions of meaning; it sets the therapy stage as a dialogic exploration of meaning. I may also explore the difficulties the client sees before her and other avenues or options open to her. This may reveal my client's longings, and woven into them we may discover new possi-

bilities. We may find new ideas and visions that neither of us would have considered separately. Together we may discover that instead of more therapy or more pharmacology, life may take a positive turn by such moves as starting a girls' rock band, learning to relax by taking more pajama time, entering a new peer group, getting a part-time job, working harder at making better grades, dropping out of school and seeking a GED, or traveling.

To illustrate, in recent consultation a client spoke of her mood swings and her feelings of guilt at not studying. Rather than focusing on the problem talk, it was important from the present standpoint to explore the positive possibilities. Thus:

Client: This week I didn't feel like I was quite with it. On Friday I was having mood swings up and down but I think it is because I was not studying enough this week. This weekend I didn't go out with my friends and I got more work done and I feel better. I have one essay I need to get done this week to be caught up.

Therapist: That sounds good. How did you start to change your focus?

Client: Well, I was sitting there the other night talking to my friend and I realized that I feel like I am in the back seat. I want to be in the driver's seat. When I keep up on my school work I feel like I am in the driver's seat.

Therapist: Where else in your life do you want to be in the driver's seat?

Client: I want to make something out of my life. I haven't been that serious about school in the past. I've been more into just being with friends.

At this point I feel as a therapist that we have moved effectively from centering on the client's deficits to exploring proactive potentials.

Along these same lines, constructionism cautions me against trying to use my own categories to "understand" my clients. Rather than assigning them a label, I would prefer to understand the world from their perspective. This is very important with adolescents, because they have a keen sense of cultural boundaries and are often curious to explore the other side. So what looks like a troubled adolescent from one perspective may be a conversation with current cultural practices. Can I, then, listen to a client's story of trouble and find within it a critique of the culture, a creative adjustment to her situation?

When adolescents get into trouble, there is a strong tendency to punish them. We think of them as having bad judgment, being too impulsive, having too little control over their emotions, and so on. Adolescent developmental theories lend a great deal of support to these tendencies, when they stress the importance of separation, of the individual's becoming an autonomous agent. But why must we accept such theoretical constructions? Would our options not be improved by considering other possible interpretations? For example, could we see within the problematic behavior a thwarted desire for deep, creative, and nonauthoritarian relationship with adults? Here we may find opportunities for bringing "offenders" and "victims" together for reconciliation. We may explore jointly shared responsibilities and search for a narrative that can include growth and appreciation as opposed to condemnation.

This same concern with shared responsibilities also informs my view of empirical evaluations of therapy programs. I can appreciate the desire for solid criteria against which we could compare different practices of therapy. But I also find that I must resist the impulse. Putting aside the enormous problems of methodology—sampling, control groups, the way in which questions create answers, response bias, retrospective distortion, and so on—we must finally admit that what counts as "improvement" or "cure" is very much a matter of value judgment. I don't think we can escape this, and any claim to value neutrality is simply misleading. When we also confront the enormous differences in society in terms of values—what it is to live a good life—we realize that a single yardstick of measurement would function oppressively. It would represent only one view of the good and silence the others. Thus, in spite of our desire for solid evaluations, I think both the profession and our clients would be better served by systematic and continuous dialogue on treatment outcomes.

In summary, as a psychotherapist I now have the opportunity hear many people's stories at important junctions in their lives. I especially appreciate being a participant in my adolescent clients' narratives. Together we navigate institutional structures, negotiate relationships, and bring forth current and future dreams. In our conversations, meaning and possibilities are proposed, reflected on together, modified, and envisioned in practice. The time between sessions becomes a place to continue the process of discovery. Self-agency does take form, but is one in which there is a stronger appreciation for the many relationships in which these girls participate. This appreciation for multiple relationships and their differing approaches to what is real and good carries into my professional and personal life more generally.

Expanding the Vision

In this article we first introduced a number of pivotal proposals issuing from dialogues on social construction. Special emphasis was given to the communal construction of reality and value, the significance of lan-

guage in constructing the world, the importance of sociopolitical reflection, and the shift to relational conceptions of self. We then offered two brief illustrations of constructionism at work, the first drawing from research on adolescent risk-taking and the second from therapeutic practice with adolescents. Constructionist proposals do not themselves prescribe any particular form of research or therapy. They generate possibilities and sensitivities rather than a new set of marching orders. However, both illustrations provided here carry with them significant markings of a constructionist orientation. In the case of the research, there is an acute sensitivity to the multiple ways in which adolescents can be constructed, both within the profession and the culture more generally, and to the various functions served by these constructions for various groups. The special attention given to adolescents' understandings of their risk-taking, and to the ways in which their risky behavior contributes to their identity and to the identity of the groups to which they belong, is also congenial with a constructionist orientation. And too, this account places the adolescent self squarely within a relational process.

Much the same constructionist posture undergirds the therapeutic orientation described above. The critique of potentially crippling constructions is revealed, in particular, in the general resistance to diagnostic categorization. In this sense, both efforts also manifest the kind of critical sensitivity invited by constructionism. The emphasis on client meaning is pivotal in the therapeutic setting, but in this case there is an added constructionist emphasis on the process by which the therapist and client co-construct meaning. Of special interest in this case, the therapist does not place the major stress on exploring the client's construction of her past life, but works with the client in developing new meanings or narratives. It is less important, one may say, to "get clear on the past" than it is to open up new possibilities.

To be sure, one can locate shortcomings in all such work. But recall that all shortcomings issue from a particular perspective, lodged within a historically situated subculture. Moreover, constructionism itself invites reflection on any piece of work from multiple standpoints. Such reflection should, ideally, give rise to greater sensitivity and possibly creative movement into the future. For example, the traditional experimentalist may fault the research on adolescent risk for its lack of sampling, experimental manipulations, and statistics. Yet, the response may be that all these demands presume that the task of research is to detect generalizations to more accurately predict the future. Our research presumes, in contrast, that most behavior is culturally and historically perishable. Thus, the aim is not to forecast specific behaviors so much as to sensitize professionals (and possibly parents and adolescents) to ways of understanding and reforming the future. For this purpose, the experimentalist's desiderata are unnecessary and possibly counterproductive. Ideally, a dialogue between the two orientations may yield a more finely tuned sense of the multiple aims of research and the differing methods required to achieve them.

Overall, it may be said that the chief aim of the constructionist dialogues is to facilitate a far richer and more fully potentiated science of psychology than presently exists. There is no attempt to curtail traditional empirical research, but simply to understand it as a specialized cultural practice with both promises and limitations. Constructionist arguments thus invite an expansion of possibilities. On the methodological level, for example, they invite into play the new ranges of qualitative and action methods that are flourishing in the social sciences more generally (see, for example, Denzin & Lincoln, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2000). Every method will construct the world in a different way; it will favor certain traditions while ignoring others; and it will have the potential to transform meanings within the culture. Experimentation, for example, constructs a world of cause and effect, and its results favor those in a position to manipulate others. In contrast, narrative methods give more voice to the views of those under study and can more easily be used to facilitate minority-group expression. Each method functions both to facilitate and impede; the invitation for a strong psychology, then, is to vitally expand the range of acceptable methods.

In the case of theory, constructionism not only invites increased critical sensitivity to the ways and means of psychological inquiry (see, for example, Hepburn, 2003). There is also an increased appreciation for the value of theory in itself. Traditional empiricism treats theory as the endpoint of research. The assumption is that through precise observation and the testing of delimited hypotheses, one may move inductively first to small models and finally to integrative theory. From a constructionist standpoint, however, the inductive view is deeply flawed. Data never speak for themselves. Rather, observations are inevitably guided by theory, however rudimentary. The world does not demand any particular construction, but once committed to a theory, the world will give way to its demands. The cognitive psychologist will never see what is obvious to the psychoanalyst, and the latter will find the former's understandings woefully myopic. Thus, from the constructionist standpoint, innovative and sociopolitically sensitive theory is at a premium. With new and compelling visions of childhood and adolescence, new lines of inquiry will open and new practices will be made possible.

Finally, with its emphasis on psychological science as a generative source of meaning within the culture, we have reason to expand the investment of the field in ongoing practices of social change. We inherit a view of the scientist as providing the kind of truth from which practitioners can make derivations. However, if we now understand the science as generating meanings

within its own cultural milieu (e.g., what counts as violence, drug dependency, or mental illness from the researcher's standpoint may not do so in vast segments of the culture), we gain an appreciation for the importance of practice in itself. That is, the practitioner is in a position to help people directly to construct or reconstruct the world in ways that are useful to them. Invited is a future in which there is equal participation in mutually enriching dialogue between scientist and practitioner.

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